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Staff development on academic learning time for at-risk youth : a case study.

Kenneth Reginald Milner
University of Massachusetts Amherst

STAFF DEVELOPMENT ON ACADEMIC LEARNING TIME

FOR

AT-RISK YOUTH-A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation Presented

by

KENNETH REGINALD MILNER

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Approved as to style and content by:

Byrd L. Jones, Chairperson of Committee

Atron A. Gentry, Member

Mzamo P. Mangaliso, Member

Marlyn Haring Hidore, Dean
Doctoral Program, School of Education

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ABSTRACT

STAFF DEVELOPMENT ON ACADEMIC LEARNING TIME

FOR

AT-RISK YOUTH-A CASE STUDY

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KENNETH R. MILNER, B.A., VIRGINIA UNION UNIVERSITY

M.A., FEDERAL CITY COLLEGE

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Directed by: Professor Byrd L. Jones

This study documented the processes for introducing varied instructional styles of teachers in effective use of academic learning time with at-risk youth in an urban junior high school and how these youth perceived teachers.

Staff development for academic achievement depends critically on implementation procedures and their involvement of teachers (and students) in ways that respect their intentions and competencies. Thus, a focus on cooperation among teachers, administrators, support staff members, and parents shaped the design and implementation of school improvement efforts.

Staff development lead teachers and supervisors of teachers to examine classroom processes and teaching styles that related to performance of at-risk students. The hypothesis: Varied instructional styles in the

effective use of academic learning time impacts positively on the performance of at-risk students has been shown in many studies. This research showed a gain in attitudes among students and teachers. At-risk students responded positively to classroom instruction where teachers reorganized and adjusted teaching to maximize student learning.

The major question of this study was, can teachers in urban junior high schools be motivated to work with at-risk youth, and if so, how? This research showed that teachers can be motivated to work with at-risk students. Staff development caused changes in the instructional delivery of teachers. A very positive relationship developed between teachers and students. Teachers became concerned about the welfare of these youths beyond that which was happening academically in the classroom.

Overall, the project demonstrated that low cost staff development is possible in urban schools when:

1. Teachers are allowed to use research and apply it in their own way;

2. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents work cooperatively together; and,

3. Teachers realize that all children can learn.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The researcher defined the following terms in order to facilitate a clearer understanding of the contents and to provide better precision in communication:

Effective teacher - The teacher referred to as being effective (by the rating officer) has received outstanding ratings for the past three years and has demonstrated successful teaching strategies in working with students at all instructional levels. He/she has participated successfully in a minimum of two staff development sessions on the effective use of academic learning time. This teacher's students have shown academic growth exceeding the minimum requirements for his/her school district.

Observations - The observation is a process of gathering information by noting facts or occurrences. The observations will consist of the researcher visiting classes for a minimum of forty minutes.

Researcher - The researcher will be referred to on a number of occasions in the study. This is the person who is actually doing the study. The researcher is also referred to as the writer and the investigator.

At-risk youth - A student whose participation in school is marginal and who will ultimately fail to satisfy his/her graduation requirement.

Participant - The participant is also referred to as the teachers and students who are actually involved in the study.

Assumptions

The key to school improvement is to provide staff development. At-risk youth will experience greater success through teachers' effective use of academic learning time. Hence, teachers must recognize and appreciate the demographical, sociological and economical factors which influence these youths' behavior. Schools cannot change these demographics or socioeconomics in the short run, but, teachers can reduce the juncture between home and school.

Limitations

This study took place solely at Charles Hart Junior High School, a public school located in the inner city of Washington, D. C., and it did not examine other urban schools. The researcher of this study was also the principal of the school where the study took place. The investigator's goal was not to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). Conference time with teachers and students had to be restricted by the researcher to an average maximum of thirty minutes so that it would not interfere with the school's instructional program.

Hart Junior High and the D. C. Public School System

This study documents the processes of introducing varied instructional styles of teachers in the effective use of academic learning time with at-risk youth in an urban junior high school and how these youth perceived their teachers. The study focused on Charles Hart Junior High School whose students are at-risk according to such measures as poverty, single family homes, high crime

rates, unemployment and underemployment, minority races, and students who have experienced multiple retentions. The school is located in the southeast section of Washington, D. C. known as Ward 8. This is a Black, urban, lower-class community bordered by public housing to the south. The Ward has a population of 75,000: 90 percent Black, 9 percent White, and 1 percent Asian. It ranks last among eight wards (one percent) in single-family housing assessed above $100,000. Other characteristics are: families in poverty ranks first at 25 percent, public housing ranks third at 2,068, and residents with four years of college or more ranks last at 6 percent.

Each year Hart's number of at-risk students had increased and the staff had become frustrated. They lacked proper training for working with these youth. Eighty-five percent of the school's staff had received their formal college education during the late 1960s and early 1970s from institutions that did not require courses in working with disadvantaged (at-risk) youth or courses in urban education (Staff survey, May, 1989). Teachers did not feel that they were effectively meeting the needs of these students and wanted assistance.

Sometimes this reflects a typical 2nd line of defense among teachers who believe that at-risk youth do not want to learn and that they (as teachers) were trained for a better class of kids. However, the principal felt that teachers were sincere and really needed staff development. The presumption is still strong that teachers know or should know best and thus, should pour knowledge into otherwise empty minds.

The problem of at-risk youth is not unique to just Hart Junior High School. Several principals of schools with similar demographics have expressed their concerns about the growing number of youth who are at-risk, the increasing number of early school leavers, students experiencing multiple retentions and teachers who feel that they need staff development to provide them with training to effectively work with these youth.

In a study by the District of Columbia Public School System, more than one-half (56.0%) of DCPS dropouts left school before entering high school (DCPS Study, 1988). The mean grade point average of dropouts was equal to a failing grade (0.55). More than one-half of the dropouts (59.9%) had an F-average, 29.0% had a D-average and 11.1% had a C-average or better (2.0 and above). As shown in Figure 1, more than one-half (55.8%) of the dropouts were chronically absent during their last year of school

(i.e., missed 25% or more of the total school year), and 35% were chronically absent the year before leaving. Further, it was found that more than three-fourths (78.3%) of the dropouts participating in this study had been retained at least once while more than one-half (52.1%) had been retained 2 or more times. Among those retained, 54.6% were male; 45.4% were female. (See Figure 2)

The most prevalent reasons cited for dropping out of school were school failure (28.0%) and personal problems outside of school (27.7%). Males and females gave different reasons: notably, females blamed academic failures (31.7%), while males more often cited personal problems as their reason for leaving (39.7%). The school atmosphere or environment was cited second most often (18.2%). No differences were noted between those dropouts currently re-enrolled and those still out of school. Overall, more dropouts (82.6%) from the D. C. School System felt that what they were learning in school was important.

Research indicates that the profile for an early school leaver included: poor academic skills, a history of discipline problems and suspensions, poor attendance, retained by school, alienation, bored in school, and over aged in class (Slavin, 1989).

The problem of at-risk youth is a national one that schools throughout the country are trying to cope with. Approximately 682,000 students beyond the eighth grade leave school early every year (DCPS, 1988).

The data presented on both the city and the location of the school directly affected this research. Washington, D. C. is an enclave of the United States Federal Government. As such, the District of Columbia Public School System, as well as other local governmental agencies, is financially and to some degree, operationally answerable to the United States Congress. Every other public school system in the United States is controlled by a state body whose members live within its boundaries, and who answer to the people, its citizens. The United States Congress is not elected by the people of Washington, D. C.

The ramifications of federal control over the District's School System are most dramatically felt in the financial dependency which has historically affected the feasibility and implementation of programs and structures in the school system; such programs and funding that would be instrumental in addressing the needs of youth who are at-risk. This Congress is overwhelmingly White (over ninety-five percent) controlling a city whose population is over seventy percent Black.

This Congress has not shown an interest, to any substantial degree, in the problems that have plagued this city or its urban school system, nor, does it appear as if it will anytime in the near future. As long as schools' enrollments are over 90% minority and as long as Black male youths are killing each other, no one in power is likely to raise a hand to help.

Students in urban schools are poorer and more are at risk. Fewer middle-income families remain in the city. More children come from single-parent families and live in neighborhoods where unemployment is high and hope is not. The achievement gap between inner-city students and more advantaged students remains high, despite recent gains by Black youngsters. Current obstacles urban educators and students face in many schools are: drugs, violence, apathy, and low expectations by educators and students.

The impoverishment of inner-city neighborhoods and the out-migration of middle and working-class residents have significantly altered the family and community context in which children grow up. Among the possible consequences against education, are a deterioration of the ability of families and neighborhoods to supervise children and support the schools, growing race and class isolation in inner-city schools, and a decline in the

financial resources available to big-city school districts.

Poor minority children are undereducated in disproportionate numbers across the country. Academically, such children may lag behind the national average by up to two years. In large cities, half of the minority children leave school without a diploma. Poverty is associated with school failure, low achievement, and leaving school prior to graduation.

The District of Columbia Public School's System is no exception to the characteristics of urban school districts. It is the 11th largest city school system, and the 21st largest nationwide. In the 1988/89 school year, it enrolled approximately 85,000 students, including: 51,175 in elementary (pre-kindergarten through 6th); 17,200 in junior high (grades 7th through 9th); 174,000 in senior high (grades 10th through 12th); 1,100 in special education; and, 1,800 in adult education.

Of the 1988/89 pre-kindergarten through grade 12 enrollment, ninety-six percent were members of minority groups, 91.7% Black. The school system's dropout rate for that school year was 42.7% according to a study done by the District of Columbia's School System entitled "A

Study of Students Who Left: D. C. Public School Dropouts" (1989).

A 1989 Board of Education report on the lives of many children living in Washington, D. C. indicated:

- About thirty-five percent of children in the District lived below the poverty level.
- More than fifty percent of the city's elementary school students qualified for free or reduced-priced meals.
- Nearly forty percent of all District children lived in families headed by a single mother.
- More than 500 homeless families and 1,200 homeless children resided in the District, 800 of whom were school-aged.
- About sixty percent of all babies born were out of wedlock and twenty percent of those births in 1984 were to teenagers (DCPS, 1988).

During the late 1980s, Washington, D. C. experienced a very serious drug problem, high unemployment rate, high dropout rate, high teenage pregnancy rate, and a high crime rate (more than 390 murders in 1989) according to the Washington Post Newspaper. All of these conditions have had a tremendous effect on the education of the city's youth. Students are afraid to pass through certain neighborhoods. Additional counseling has been needed to assist with emotional problems that youth are experiencing. Some of these problems are: losing friends as a result of killings or suicides, child

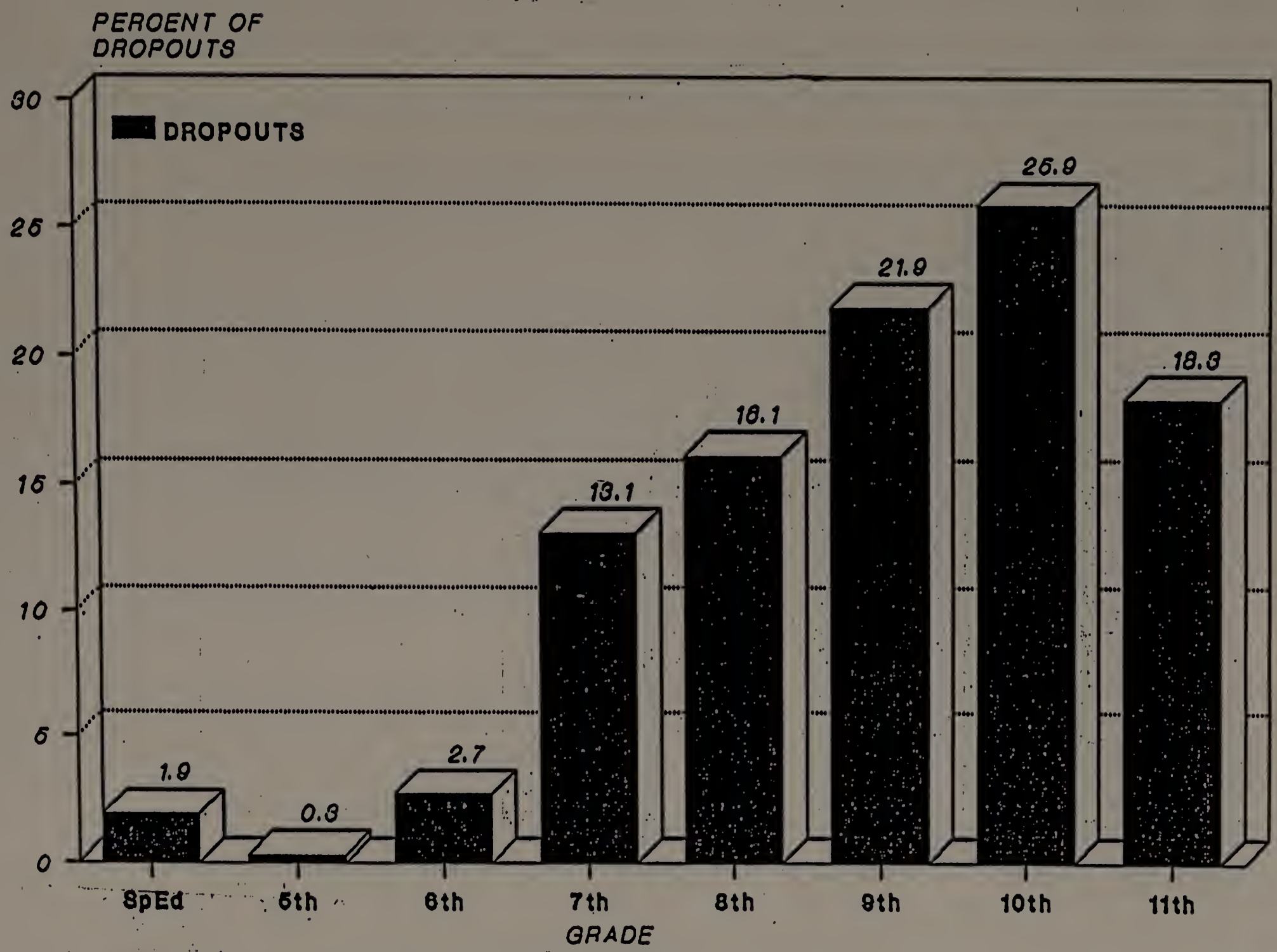


Figure 1 **Last Grade Completed**

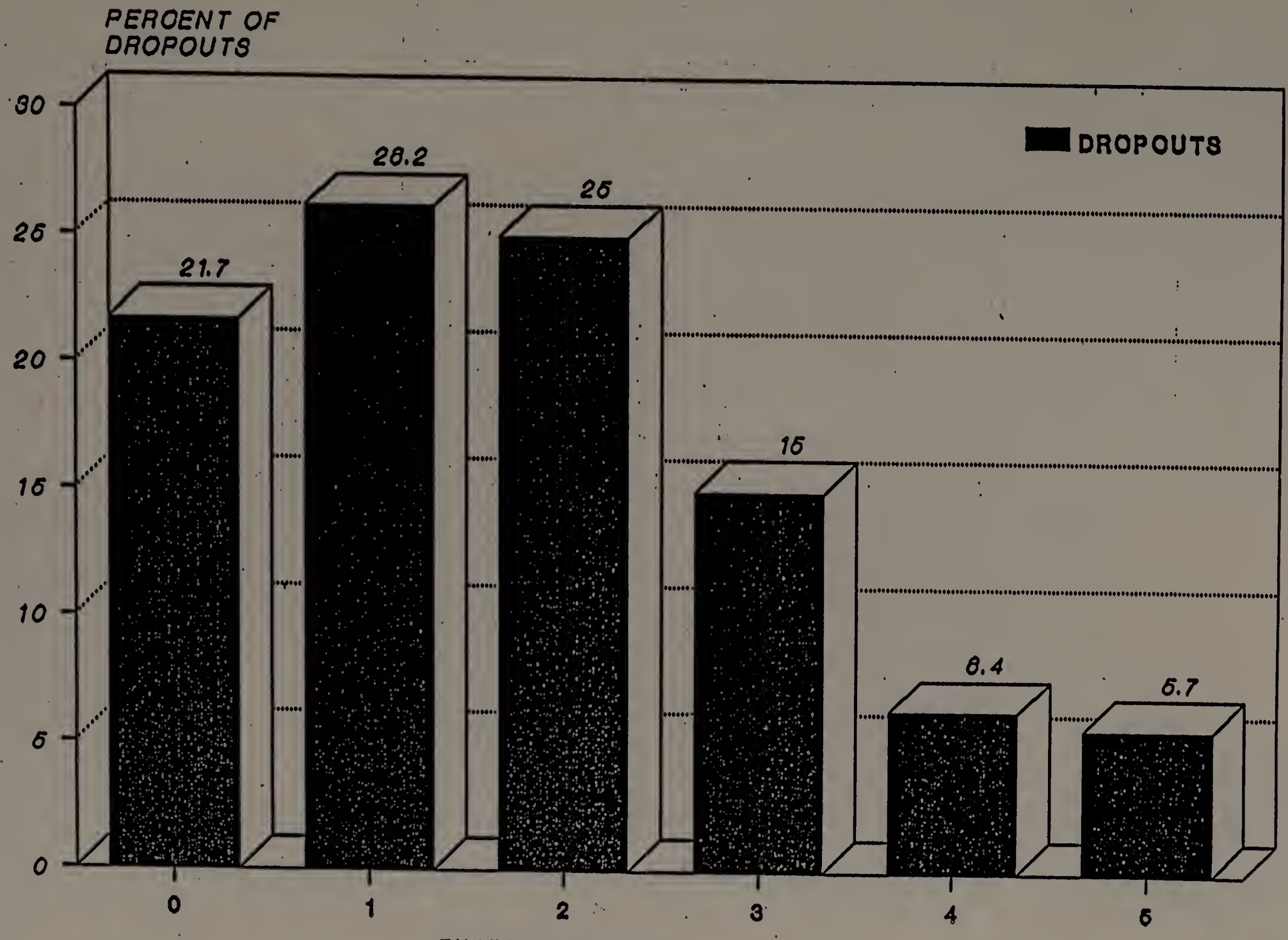


Figure 2 **Number of Times Retained in Grade**

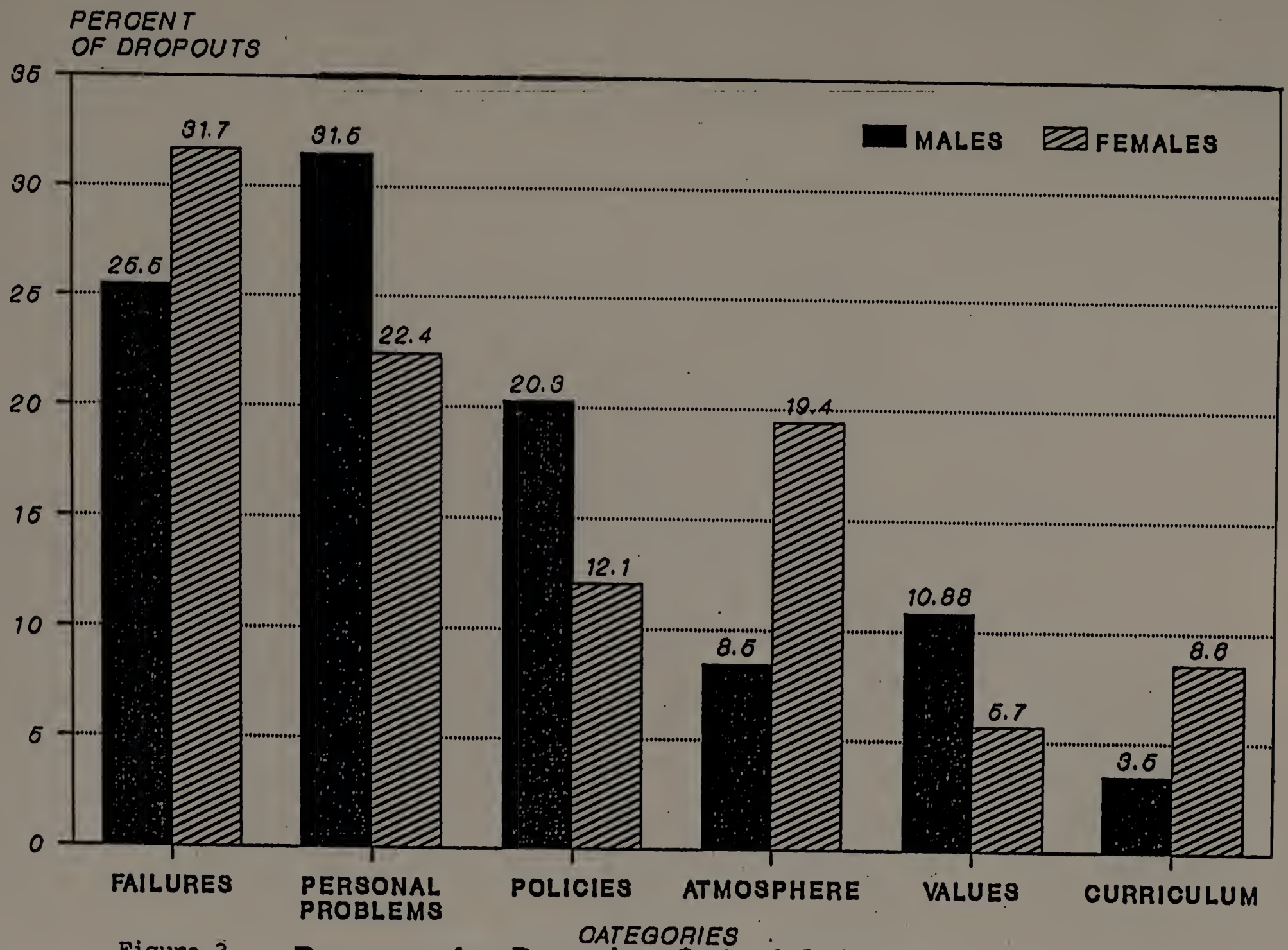


Figure 3 **Reasons for Dropping Out of School**

molestations, child abuse, teenage pregnancies, substance abuse by family members and sometimes by students. However, surveys continue to show less drug use among African Americans than among European Americans. Also, they show crime rates as nearly the same. Only when looking at arrest records do Blacks appear in disproportionate numbers and even more so for convictions.

The current epidemic of violence in the District of Columbia is but one problem affecting the public school system. Two others: are very little stability in its leadership from central administration and lack of hope by students. The school system has had three different superintendents within the past ten years. Central office has been ineffectual in leading schools to improved academic achievement. The school system continues to suffer from decreasing enrollment, poor test scores, a high dropout rate, and a high teenage pregnancy rate.

With the incidences of drug abuse, crime, teenage pregnancy, homelessness, alcoholism, and poverty in inner-city neighborhoods schools must recognize the devastating harm on youth. Their view of the future is a very dim one. From September, 1989, to February, 1990, Hart Junior High School had 10 cases of children who were

homeless, 8 cases of students becoming pregnant, 10 cases where students were placed in drug abuse programs and 11 cases where students were incarcerated. Four students died as a result of drug related deaths. These were only the cases which were reported. Other cases were probably not reported.

Because of these problems and concerns, Hart needed programs that adjusted to students' concerns without "watering down" the curriculum. These programs would not only provide teachers with a repertoire of teaching techniques and strategies, but they would also provide them with current literature and research on these topics.

The following areas were researched in order to clarify what is known about staff development for effective school programs: individualization in instruction, effective use of academic learning time, learning styles of students, at-risk youth and students who leave school before completing high school.

School climate shapes the direction and implementation for innovations in any school setting (Sarason, 1982). A positive school climate sets the foundation for effective learning. This foundation is achieved through the cooperation of teachers, administrators, support staff and parents. Therefore,

staff development activities aimed at academic learning time will also seek to foster a positive school climate by encouraging teacher agreement on high expectations for students in both the formal and informal curriculum.

Hart Junior High School is a public institution of approximately 1000 students and 85 staff members. Both students and staff are 99% Black. The administration, consisting of a principal and two assistants, is Black.

The instructional continuum extends from grades seven through nine in English, Spanish, Latin, French, History, Art, Science, Mathematics, Physical Education and Health. Business and Computer Education are offered to eighth graders and Industrial Technology, Home Economics, Typing, Vocal Music, Journalism and Instrumental Music are offered as electives to all grades. All seventh graders who are two or more years behind in their comprehension skills must take a reading course. Students who are academically deficient or academically advanced receive special education (see Tables 1 and 2).

Hart Junior High aims to promote excellence by continuing to train its employees in an effort to improve instruction. Good staff development builds on such positive intentions as attempting to provide a viable, comprehensive instructional program with a positive

Table 1 Functions Chart

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL — SCHOOL YEAR 1989-90

ADMINISTRATIVE AIDE

Office Management
Data Control
Communications

PRINCIPAL

School Operations
Personnel Management
Budget Management
Administrative Team Coordinator
School/Community Relations
Performance Evaluation
School Assessment
Facilities/Management

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Procurement
Stores Clerk
Activity Coordinator
Attendance
Safety/Security
Athletic Coordinator
Instruction
Staff Development
Discipline

CBC TEAM

Coordinate teachers
the CBC S2P2 Implementation Plan
Staff Development
CBC Resource Management
Instructional Support

PARAPROFESSIONALS

Attendance
Instructional Support
Data Control
Stores Clerk
Safety/Security

CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Instruction
Management
Attendance
Discipline
Community
Community Literacy
Safety/Security

RESOURCE TEACHERS

Transition

School-in-School (SIS) Program for 7th grade retentions.
Volunteers

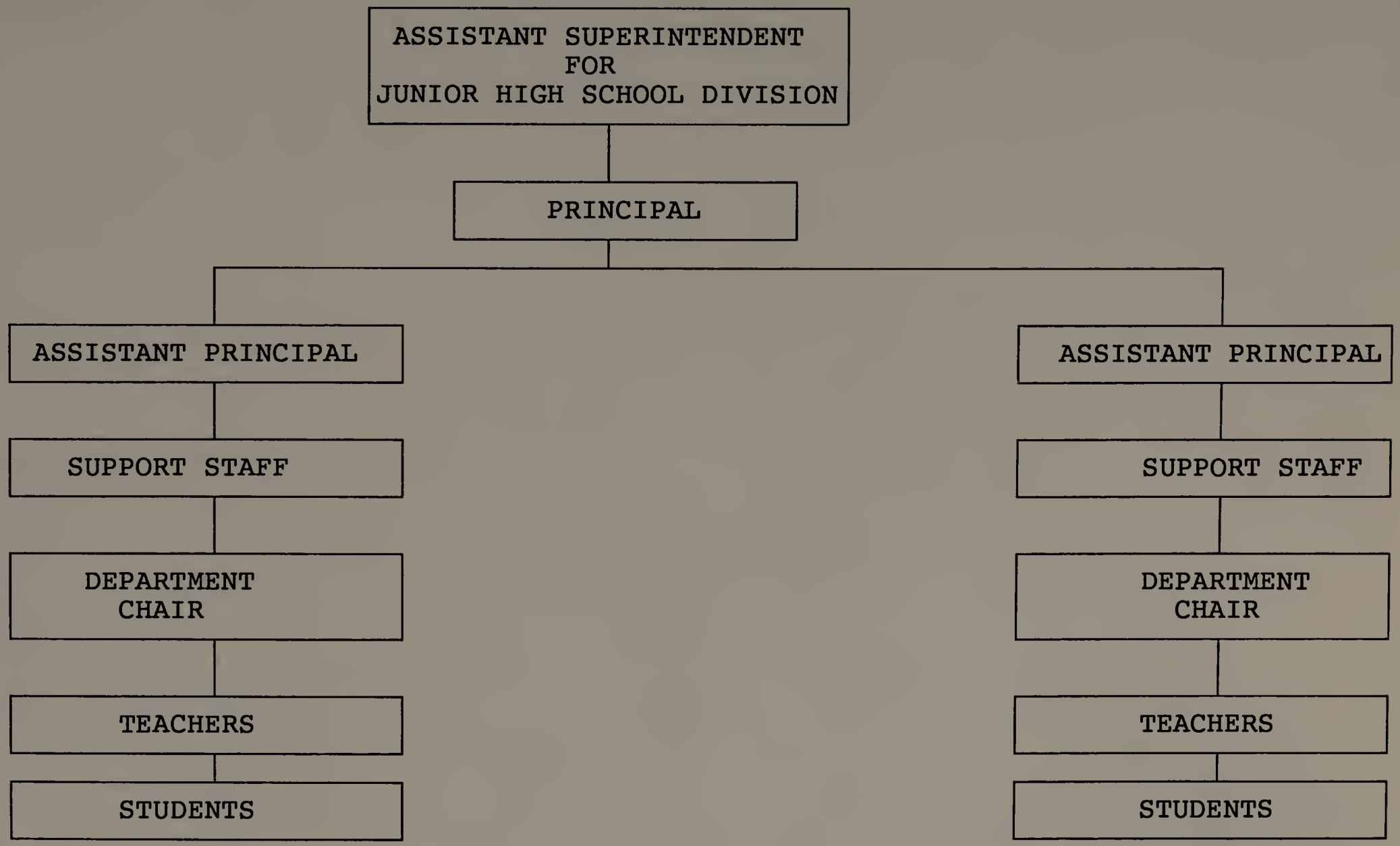
SUPPORT STAFF

Management
Special Programs
Staff Development
Attendance
Safety/Security

OTHERS

Special Education
Special Ed. Program
HEP Development & Supervision
Assessment

Table 2 Organization Chart



learning environment allowing educational experiences for all children. The staff would then attempt to provide purposeful, quality learning attuned to helping individuals fulfill their interests, aspirations, and needs. Teachers would strive to develop within each student his/her intellectual potentialities so that they can use their minds effectively.

Hart uses a competency-based curriculum which is mandated by the School Board. Objectives are presented in strands and students must master a minimum of 70% of all objectives for his/her grade level in each discipline. This is inclusive of 100% of the identified critical objectives.

The School Improvement Team, which consists of teachers, parents, and students, developed the following school goals: positive self-esteem for students, a minimum of a "C" grade point average, each student working to his/her potential, a minimum of 20% of student body on the honor roll, an attendance rate of no less than 92%, and testing at or above the national norm on the California Test of Basic Skills (see Appendix B).

These experiences would enable each child to acquire the skills, competencies, and knowledge that are essential to his or her development as an individual. They are also necessary for the attainment of most jobs.

However, there were some problems that Hart needed to address which were not solely demographic: effective use of academic learning time, meeting the needs of at-risk youth, and low expectations for students.

A component of the school's comprehensive improvement plan addressed these concerns through a series of staff development workshops. The general plan of action was to provide in-service training to teachers so that they could better meet the needs of the at-risk students with the competencies acquired. Hopefully, this would also relieve some of the feeling of helplessness among many instructors by suggesting additional teaching strategies and techniques that they would be able to use in their daily instructional program.

Some of the participating staff members agreed to examine the results as part of the school's continued effort toward improvement. The anticipated result was that teachers would look at the varied instructional styles in the effective use of academic learning time with youth at-risk in an urban junior high school. Hopefully, these styles would assist instructors in working with other youth who were at-risk.

As principal, the researcher conducted a faculty meeting on Tuesday, September 5, 1989, and discussed the increase in the number of at-risk students at Hart Junior

High. The multiple retentions these students had experienced and the concerns of staff about working with youth at-risk with no formal training on how to do so were the main topics of discussion. He proposed how important it would be to effectively use academic learning time with these youth in an effort to increase their experiences with success. Volunteers for a case study of this topic were asked for and the first teachers to volunteer in each of the following categories were chosen: two mathematics, two science, two English, and two social studies. Seventy-five students were identified from a list of Hart's most at-risk students.

The researcher limited the students to a manageable number because it was the maximum number (in order for him) to effectively look-up and review students' records, interview students, examine questionnaires, prepare a quality case study that would be beneficial to the students and teachers at Hart and discuss concerns about these students with faculty.

At the end of the school year, the participating teachers, administrators and department chairpersons would review the case study and make recommendations for implementation.

Statement of the Problem

At-risk students experience very little success in school, and they frequently leave before receiving a diploma because of the slow and incomplete adjustment of school, by teachers and counselors, to the needs of kids. Nationally, over twenty-five percent of the potential high school graduates leave before graduation. In some major cities, the rate is more than forty percent. Restrictive standards in the public schools have affected millions of minority and disadvantaged students who are "at-risk." Educational reform has changed the rules before the system has had a chance to accommodate an increasing number of students who leave school prior to graduation and without employment prospects. Schools should identify at-risk students and provide programs to prevent their failure before adding to graduation requirements.

The at-risk youth are not so much the problem themselves but unfortunate victims of the system. The real problems are the larger issues of this urban community, Washington D. C., such as: poverty, public housing, violence, drugs, and the lack of power from politicians in the southeast section of this city. However, Edmonds and others have identified urban schools

that are effective. Staff has to work hard together - but they can do it. Students come to school with a range of economic, familial, social, and racial stresses. All these issues impact greatly on the at-risk youth at Hart Junior High and on all the school's educators who have to teach them.

These are not educational issues that Hart's instructors can control and solve. The teachers are unable to do anything about these societal ills. Therefore, staff development plays a crucial role in training educators how to teach the at-risk youth whose performance will be affected by societal problems which are impacting their lives. Staff development will also create more understanding of the at-risk youth and how to cope with the problems these students bring to the learning environment. It will place more emphasis on their academic learning time. Schools can respond not only to the academic needs of at-risk children, but also to their emotional and health needs (Edmonds, 1982).

By documenting the design and implementation of a staff development project, the study sought answers to the following research questions:

(1) Can teachers in urban junior high schools be motivated to work with at-risk youth?

(1a) If yes, how can that be done?

(1b) Will students respond to more flexibility or openness to their needs?

(2) How do teachers organize activities that will be meaningful to the lives of at-risk youth?

(3) How do teachers reach a sense of accomplishment with at-risk youth?

(4) How do at-risk youth perceive their teachers who are attempting to address their needs and focus on academic learning time?

(5) How does staff development impact on teacher performance with at-risk youth?

The majority of youth at-risk who leave school before graduation are the children of poverty and minority populations. Each year large numbers of Blacks leave the school system early. When students leave school, their lives are forever diminished. Unemployment rates are much higher for school leavers than for high school graduates. Local governments spend millions to support or incarcerate the unemployed while losing millions in potential tax revenues.

Educators have asked what causes so many young people to leave school before graduation. In most cases, problems began early. Students who leave school without meeting their requirements for graduation generally fit certain descriptors of at-risk students who need special understanding, teaching, intervention and help. Few at-

risk children receive that support. In many cases, teachers want to help, but lack knowledge and support for changing their approaches. Staff development aimed at making a difference in the lives of at-risk youth unleashes teachers' motivation and professional skills.

In working with at-risk students, teachers should be aware that one in five school-age children lives in poverty. Of every one hundred children born today, twenty are born out of wedlock, thirteen to teenage mothers, twelve to parents who will divorce before the child is eighteen years old, fifteen into households where no parent is employed, and fifteen into households where income is below the poverty level. Before their adulthood, the families of twenty-five of these babies will have been on welfare at some point. By the year 2000, as many as one-third of young children will be disadvantaged and at-risk (Cavazos, 1989). In the Hart neighborhood those figures may be doubled.

Teachers should view their work as extending beyond the classroom and into the homes of their at-risk children. If educators meet the needs of these individuals, they will find that in addition to the personal satisfaction it brings, they will increase the life chances of these youth. In the classroom, teachers need to demand more of the at-risk child, not less.

Experience has shown that higher expectations produce higher results (Edmonds, 1979). Few children perform beyond what is asked of them.

At-risk youth are usually low academic achievers who exhibit low self-esteem. They lack self-confidence and have low expectations for themselves. Disproportionate numbers of them are males and minorities. Generally they are from low socioeconomic status families. Students who are in a low-income and minority status find themselves at a higher risk. The issue gets at larger society, because teachers do not respect "street knowledge" and often show biases against poor and minority children. Also, children realistically assess their life chances as reduced and so naturally have less motivation to learn in expectation of future earnings.

At-risk students seldom participate in school activities and identify less and less with the school. Disciplinary and truancy problems lead to failure to acquire the necessary credits for promotion and graduation. They may exhibit impulsive behavior and their peer relationships are problematic (under stress). Family problems, drug additions, pregnancies, and other problems prevent them from participating successfully in school. As they experience failure and fall behind their

peers, school becomes a negative environment that reinforces their low self-esteem (Comer, 1987).

Successful programs require intensive care; they provide students with personal contact by a qualified, caring staff. Schools often cooperate with parents to identify at-risk students and to advise them on how to help their children (who are at-risk).

While there are countless reasons why students leave school prior to graduation, by far, the most common reasons cited were poor academic performance by students and school climate (DCPS, 1988). In the Washington School's study, a majority of dropouts identified classroom instructional climate and school failure as the most prevalent causes, directly or indirectly, for most students leaving the District of Columbia School System (DCPS, 1988). These findings are consistent with the national results reported in the High School and Beyond Survey (Peng, 1983), as well as in another report of national findings (Ranbom, 1986).

Schools can allow students to experience success. Studies of effective schools (Rutter et al., 1979; Coleman et al., 1981 and Edmonds, 1982) confirm findings from research on effective classrooms. Starting classes on time, minimizing disruptions, reducing disciplinary problems, having better school and class attendance,

increasing the amount of homework, and obtaining higher rates of engagement in academic activities are outcomes on academic learning time in effective schools.

Academic tasks define the work environment of a classroom and the context in which teaching and learning takes place. Task is defined as that which determines the substance of instruction. Teachers influence students' achievement in profound ways through the tasks they assign. At the same time, a teacher's instructional practices affect the tasks that are enacted and the quality of the time students spend accomplishing academic work (Brophy and Good, 1986). By explaining work clearly, monitoring student progress, providing confirmation and corrective feedback, and holding students accountable for their work and effective use of their time, a teacher can increase the likelihood that students will benefit from this academic time.

Academic learning time is the amount of time students spend on learning activities or tasks that are at an appropriate level of difficulty; one at which students have a high success rate or high level of successful learning experiences. Research shows that students who are given the opportunity to engage in learning activities that they can complete successfully seventy-five percent of the time achieve more than students who are given instruction at a difficulty level

at which they will be successful only fifty percent of the time (Fisher, Berliner, 1981).

The more time students spend working on mathematics, reading, and activities that they can perform successfully, the more engaged students will be and the more success they will have. When students experience success in their work, their self-esteem increases (Slavin, 1989).

The research shows that there is a wide variation among classrooms in the amounts of allocated time, engaged time, and academic learning time (Wyne and Stuck, 1982). The effects that these times have on student achievement show how important it is to have good classroom management practices so that instructional time is maximized. Highly interactive teaching practices will also give the most in student engagement and in student achievement.

Research on instructional time views the effective use of academic learning time as an important element to consider in instructional planning and decision making. If students do not use academic learning time effectively, they are likely to learn less content than those students who do. Also, if a substantial increase is made on the effective use of time on task, there is likely to be dramatic gains in student performance (Brophy, 1979; Good, 1979; Rosenshine, 1979).

The problem of at-risk students is serious and vexing. Like other complex issues, dropping out of school affects more than those students who leave school early. The transition from childhood to independent adulthood takes time for identity to form, maturity to set in and values to develop - a demanding journey which will require teachers to be more attuned to the needs and problems of these youths such as low self-esteem and low expectations for themselves. Many young people do not effectively make the transition to adulthood, hence, the future of these youths then becomes one of at-risk. They find it difficult to get employment, become recipients of welfare, and are often in trouble with the law.

Without adequate and effective staff development to train teachers in working with the at-risk child, these students face a grim vocational future. The 21st Century is approaching and with it will come an increased demand for service businesses and an advanced technology which will reshape the job market. Today's at-risk youth must be better educated, skilled, and given opportunities for success. Their confidence must be bolstered and self-esteem enhanced in order for them to find employment.

Children who do not experience success in school, who lack self-esteem, and who have low expectations for themselves are at-risk of failing in school; and, thus,

lack skills and expectations leading to productive citizenship. Schools that do not help children develop adequately outside of the classroom, as well as inside, simply maintain or increase the risk of academic and life failure.

To overcome prior developmental limitations among students, adults who teach effectively have caretaking or child-rearing skills. The climate of relationships in effective schools is better at a level that permits their use and effectiveness. All adults involved with young people are more or less child-rearers. Yet, little or no attention is given to the selecting of teachers with these skills or to providing practice in such skills during their pre-service and in-service training. Good teachers learn to create a building-level social system and an ethos that promotes constructive interactions in teaching and learning.

Major social problems such as poverty and broken homes become educational problems when schools fail to adjust. At-risk students' poor academic learning is due to schools' inability to adjust the institutions to the social changes that have taken place. These changes include an increase in the number of homes headed by one parent, an increase in the number of "latch-key" children, drug addicted parents, high crime, gang wars,

ill prepared pre-schoolers, child molestations, a high rate of unemployment, and low expectations by students, parents, and teachers. Academic learning time for at-risk youth is a serious concern of schools. Unless this time is spent at a high success rate for these youth, teachers may find themselves adding to the perpetuation of society's social problems.

Staff development provides educators with an understanding of the effective use of academic learning time with at-risk youth. Teachers are able to use this information in their instructional planning. Such workshops include instruction in values, teaching and learning styles, the effective use of academic learning time, and changing the social stratification schools are confronted with.

By accepting social stratification as an overlay on our public schools, educators reinforce such inequalities through institutional practices. These include tracking and special education placements that usually, even if well intended, result in branding students while seldom showing positive outcomes (Biklin, 1988; Oakes, 1985). These policies promote, without support, the retention, suspension, discharge, and voluntary withdrawal of large numbers of working-class and poor adolescents prior to graduation (Fine, 1986; National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1987).

Those who are called "at-risk", and needing the most educationally, suffer disproportionately from practices that may be designed toward better discipline but which empirically facilitate early exit. Some institutional experiences predict well the tendency to leave school prior to graduation. These practices include, but are not limited to, the following: heavy discipline, higher suspension rates (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1987), more notes sent home, increased probability of being retained and "tracked down" (Oakes, 1985), dull and repetitious pedagogical strategies, remote curricula, low expectations, and parental exclusion from schools.

Public-school curricula and associated pedagogies should be infused richly by empowered teachers and para-professionals; not made "teacher-proof," rigidly standardized, or paced so that educators are demoted to implementers rather than recognized as creative professionals (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985; Giroux and McLaren, 1986). Schools should focus on teacher expectations, varied teaching and learning styles, and a diversity of approaches rather than on discipline and standardization.

Effective schools provide young people with academic skills and patterns of work and behavior that allow them

to participate both in this society and in this economy. School systems should identify and then assist at-risk students, who may stay in school but never achieve academic skills and values essential for effective citizenship.

Achievement is the attainment of a set of skills, knowledge, and values that encourage one to learn on one's own, to participate as an equal member of a democratic society, and to gain employment in a competitive economy. Because schooling is a nearly universal experience of American children, success in school keys development of positive self-concept and self-image. When children fail in school, either directly by not passing courses or indirectly by passing from one class to the next but without significant learning, then self-esteem is often jeopardized. Learning comes at different rates and in various forms for diverse individuals, but schools have a responsibility to assure that learning is liberating both intellectually and personally, as well as, useful politically and economically. The goal for all students should be achievement. Achievement is really an expanded definition of literacy: the ability to read, communicate, compute, make judgements, and take actions resulting from them (Graham, 1981).

From the considerable literature currently available about school dropouts and children who are at-risk, it is known today, unlike the past, that there is one characteristic that is true for nearly all of them -- they are not doing well academically. This is not because of a lack of academic ability. It may or may not be tied to disruptive behavior in school or erratic attendance or linked to problems they are facing in their personal lives or at home. It may or may not be related to poor instruction from their teachers. The causes of low achievement are multiple, but the consequences for the child are unitary: repeated failures alienates students.

A simplified, fragmented, and dull curriculum does not serve any students. By modifying instructional modes, all children can learn the curriculum. Curricular goals for the most able students are also viable for those who show less achievement. New ways to use modern technologies constructively will enhance all students' and all teachers' learning. Schools that work effectively with at-risk youth are those that improve the quality of instruction, rather than reduce what is taught (Carroll, 1963).

Many students begin junior high school with a learning gap in those areas valued by schools, thus

becoming more at-risk (Goodlad, 1984; Good, 1982; and Brophy, 1979). Most models of interventions assume that students cannot maintain a normal pace without prerequisite knowledge and learning skills. Thus, such youngsters are placed in less demanding instructional settings -- either by pulling them out of their regular classrooms or by adapting the regular classroom to their needs -- to provide remedial or compensatory educational services. This approach most often appears to be both rational and compassionate but often has consequences opposite of those intended.

Less demanding instruction stigmatizes students with a mark of inferiority and reduces learning expectations both for the students and for their teachers (Goodlad, 1984). Such students are viewed as slow learners and treated accordingly, with negative consequences for student esteem and performance. Slow-paced instruction emphasizes repetition of material through drill and practice. The result is a school experience that lacks intrinsic vitality, omits crucial learning skills and reinforcement, and moves at a plodding pace.

In contrast, effective programs are based on raising the expectations of teachers and staff. These programs confer higher status on the youth at-risk so that the learning progress they achieve will improve their self-esteem and act as a motivator for continued success.

Vivid examples, interesting applications, and problem solving activities both challenge and motivate through constant drill and practice.

Significance of the Study

There are few empirical studies on the effective use of academic learning time with youths at-risk. A review of the literature shows studies on academic learning time and on youth at-risk, but not the correlation between the two. The effective school must serve all students at all times and with the same kinds of concerns.

Many at-risk students feel alienated from school. They feel that no one cares, that assembly-line schools and over crowded classrooms have caused schools to become depersonalized. Educational reforms must focus on the affective domain. This is why educators should examine effective use of academic learning time for youth at-risk.

This study was part of a school improvement plan at Hart Junior High School that would use staff development as one means of attempting to improve the educational experiences of its youth. The focus was also to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. This school had over 200 identified at-risk youth and a staff that was

seeking techniques and strategies (through a questionnaire, over 95 percent of the staff requested workshops and training sessions on using time effectively with at-risk youth) that would assist them in working with this population.

At-risk students are the students who have negative experiences in and negative attitudes toward school. Many reject school discipline policies or believe their teachers are not interested in them. Others read below grade level, have low scores in mathematics or minimum-competency tests, and have been retained in a grade or in multiple grades. Still others see no connection between school performance and a job. Many of them are poor; and, many of them are minorities. Less apparent, but equally at risk, are the youngsters whose teachers do not expect much of them. The at-risk students who become dropouts share a number of characteristics (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986). Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have the highest dropout rate; among ethnics, Hispanics have the highest rate, followed by Blacks, then Whites. Low socioeconomic status coupled with minority group status are strong predictors of dropping out. Other demographic factors which influence the dropout rate include: single parent families, and large families living in a city or in the urban or rural South.

Students' low expectations of receiving either good schooling or good grades often accounts for their dropping out of school. These negatives tie in with their disciplinary problems, of which truancy is the most common offense. Before dropping out of school, at-risk students demonstrate low self-esteem and a sense of having lost control of their futures. Because many at-risk youth perceive their teachers as not showing much interest in their education, they develop low self-esteem and their expectations for success are not very high.

The at-risk population that is most visible is that of dropouts, students who leave school as early as the law permits and without benefit of diploma or graduation. A picture of a typical dropout presented in the research literature was one of a young person who came from a low socioeconomic background which may have included various forms of family stress or instability. If this young person was consistently discouraged by the school because he or she had received signals about academic inadequacies and failures, perceived little interest or caring from teachers, and saw the institutions' discipline system as ineffective and unfair; then it would not be unreasonable to expect that the student would become alienated and uncommitted to getting a high school diploma (Wehlage, Rutter, and Turnbough, 1987, p. 71).

Although dropouts experience an array of problems, the point is also raised in the literature that other students with the same kinds of problems remain in school. Thus, it is suggested that the deciding factor may be the combination of problems, severity of a single problem, or the unavailability of alternatives (Orr, 1987).

Youth who leave school prior to graduation are the most glaring failure of our schools. They are visible and very costly in terms of wasted potential and public expense. If schools want to keep at-risk students in school, then they must proceed on the belief that these young people have the capacity to become more than minimally educated, and that school can be the primary place where this learning begins in earnest. Research by the Center for Effective Schools strongly suggests that some schools are more successful with the same kinds of students than other schools, mainly because of how the schools are managed.

Research information suggests that most early school leavers do not have low I.Q.s (Wehlage, 1987, p.6). The characteristic that most of these students share is that they are two years behind their peers in reading and math skills, and that by the time they reach the seventh grade they have been kept back a grade for one or more years.

Students leave because they feel unable to get along in the specific school. This is evidenced by the high absenteeism level and the lack of participation in school activities. They feel cast out from the school and see themselves as being on the other side of the fence from their teachers. Most of them do not consult with an adult at the school before leaving.

At-risk students do not choose ignorance. They care about their future, but see few opportunities in a traditional school setting and a standard curriculum. Many of these young people can be very successful in alternative settings. Schools must begin to focus on those elements of structure and curriculum that provide the greatest opportunities for the success of these at-risk students. These opportunities should also focus on prevention, early intervention, late intervention, and recovery of academic deficiencies. Support systems should be used to assist those students who are at the greatest risk of leaving school.

Since a disproportionate number of dropouts are male and older than average for their grade level, schools must design programs and curricula that will hold the interest of these young men. Staff development is crucial for training teachers in how to: maximize instruction for these youth, motivate them to do their

best at all times, and make them feel good about themselves. These young people have had fewer opportunities than their classmates for learning outside of school. Their grades and test scores are usually lower. They read less, do less homework, and have more disciplinary problems in school. They also seem to be unpopular with other students and alienated from school life. They tend not to take part in any of the schools extracurricular activities (Strother, 1986, p. 326).

At-risk students who become dropouts share a number of characteristics (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986). Few dropouts gain employment. They are dependent on welfare and are a tremendous liability to society.

Much of the initial education reform movement ignored children at-risk, concentrating instead on helping middle-class students attain excellence (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986). Until recently, little attention was paid to those who are failing or barely squeaking by. Some of the education reforms (for example, requiring a more academic curriculum and instituting minimum competency exams of promotion or graduations) may even have worsened conditions, in the short run, for children at-risk. Students already on the verge of dropping out may be pushed out because they can not meet the higher requirements. If they fail a minimum competency exam after twelve years of substandard education, they may be

given a certificate of attendance instead of a diploma, and pushed out to try to find jobs as best they can.

In the long run, strengthening high school graduation requirements and toughening the curriculum may help children at-risk, but only if they are helped early in life and throughout their entire schooling. For the immediate future, though, many of these children will fail.

Dropouts and at-risk children have begun to get more attention in the last few years, in part because business and industry have become concerned about what it is costing society to have teens leave school with few, if any of the skills needed for work or to be fully participating citizens. Approximately one-fourth of the dropouts between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four are unemployed; a much higher percentage than of those who had finished high school (U. S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics, 1986). Many more are not on the unemployment rolls because they are not actively looking for work. A study reported in Harriet Willis' (1986) Students At-Risk found that a male student who dropped out of school in California would earn $187,000 less over his lifetime than a high school graduate, while a female dropout would earn $122,000 less.

A class from a large urban high school with a forty percent dropout rate, would lose millions of dollars in lifetime earnings. The Committee for Economic Development composed of leaders from two hundred major American corporations, estimates that each year's school dropouts cost the nation $240 billion in lost earnings and taxes over their lifetimes. To these billions of dollars must be added the high cost of welfare, law enforcement, crime and social services needed by the dropouts.

The dropout rate and other problems have become even more serious because the groups with the highest dropout rates, the highest poverty rates and the highest incidence of teen pregnancy are also the groups growing the fastest. This nation must address this issue or become at-risk.

Children are least at risk when schools decide that education is its highest priority. Students are most at risk when pedagogy required for them is complicated and beyond the reach of ordinary teachers.

Over the last two decades, some progress has been made in improving urban schools (Levin, 1986, pp. 8-9). For example, studies of academic achievement between minority and non-minority students and between students of low socioeconomic status and other students suggest

that as much as one-fourth of the achievement gap that existed between these groups has been closed over the last 20 years. However, the larger part, three fourths, remains. Progress made has not been adequate to bring low-income and minority students to the mainstream of educational life in America. This achievement gap starts in elementary school and grows such that, by junior high, these students are performing at an average of two years behind.

Principals have begun to give staff development in-service training using the research on academic learning time in an effort to improve schools (Sparks and Sparks, 1984). The impact academic learning time data and procedures will have depends not only on the utility of the information itself, but on the implementation and training strategies employed. The results of research on academic learning time have several characteristics that should support Hart's school improvement program. First, the results are firmly grounded in the observable classroom phenomena with which teachers deal on a day-to-day basis. Second, many of the concepts have high face validity and can be easily communicated to teachers. Third, many improvement efforts focus on providing feedback to individual teachers about their actual performance and the performance of their students. Fourth, this feedback is perceived to be valuable by many

teachers because it can be given in the context of a powerful accounting system. Since Hart's teachers deal with time allocation, duration, and timing decisions as part of their everyday work, to have feedback on the results of their decisions could be highly effective in working with youth who have been identified as being at-risk.

Students' opportunities to learn material is a major determinant of their learning. This refers to both time scheduled for instruction, such as a class period (allotted time) and the time actually engaged in learning activities (engaged time).

Classroom management skills correlated with student achievement gain not only because skilled managers tend to be good instructors, but also, because they know how to use academic learning time effectively. According to Doyle (1979), a task is composed of a goal to be attained and a set of activities related to the attainment of the goal.

Successful teachers are task-oriented and businesslike in moving the class along at a brisk pace. Material must be presented at the right level of difficulty for students, however, not at a level beyond their ability to keep up, because it is important to allow high levels of student success. Successful

teachers account for every moment during the day, moving students briskly from step to step, but steps are small, easily within the grasp of most students (Doyle, 1979).

According to research by David Berliner (1979), engaged time or time on task has been found to be a consistent predictor of achievement. Students and classes with high levels of academic learning time are likely to achieve more than those with lower accumulations of academic learning time.

Reviewers of recent research on teaching (Brophy, 1979; Good, 1979; Rosenshine, 1979) have concluded that classroom management skills are associated not only with student attention and time on task, but with student achievement. Staff development sessions at Hart must address the importance of effective class control with at-risk youth.

Hodgkinson (1985) indicates the importance for educators to see the education system from the perspective of those who move through the system; changes in the composition of the group will change the system. He presents consequences of demographic changes as they relate to youth at-risk:

1. More children enter schools from homes where U. S. policies have forced families into poverty.

2. Pressures have caused some families to separate creating single parent households.

3. More children exist from minority backgrounds.

4. Percentage of children who have had Head Start and similar programs have decreased, even though more are eligible.

5. Larger numbers of premature babies lead to more learning difficulties in school.

6. Children whose parents never married have increased, now 12 out of every 100 births.

7. The dropout rate continues to increase.

8. Children from teenage mothers have increased.

9. There are more "latch-key" children and children from "blended" families as a result of remarriage of one original parent (Hodgkinson, 1985, pp. 20-22).

The Study Commission of the Chief State School Officers stated that children at-risk constitute a population with whom schools have not succeeded historically. The Commission cited a variety of problems faced by at-risk students themselves, attitudes that include a "blaming the victim" mentality, the perception that not all children can learn and the feeling that school is not the place for a substantial number of children (Chief State School Officers, 1987). The unwillingness of local districts to take responsibility for this population and a lack of priority for at-risk learners, particularly at the federal level, are causes for concern, as well. This has caused individual schools

to design and implement programs that would address the needs of this growing population of at-risk youth.

Drawing out the full potential of students requires a variety of techniques, styles and strategies. Coercion and threats motivate some students, but for many others the key is teaching, contacts with other students excited about learning, or special incentives. Many states have concentrated on coercion. Coercion as a basic approach, however, has not worked well in the past for at-risk children, and it seems unlikely that it will work well with at-risk youth now.

Schools should stimulate and support better work-ways that do not have the risk of both negative educational consequences and ruined opportunities to get a decent job. Establishing a positive relationship that has mutual respect and trust can go a long way toward fostering and promoting an effective teaching and learning situation.

Some school districts have attempted to inject into inner-city schools some of the characteristics present in middle-class schools by stimulating teachers to raise their expectations. Large amounts of aid and many years of effort may have to be expended on changing a single school in hopes of finding a model that can be used in many urban schools. While results in individual schools

have sometimes been extraordinary, no such readily expandable model has been found in more than two decades of massively funded experimentation (Chief State School Officers, 19876).

Students who are at risk of leaving school prior to their graduation date have become one of the most serious problems facing schools (Fine, 1986). The research information on dropouts is of significant importance to this study because the characteristics and problems of these youth are the same as those of at-risk students attending Hart Junior High.

Research has shown that thirty percent of dropouts leave school during or before the tenth grade, forty-four percent leave during or before the eleventh grade, and twenty-six percent leave during the twelfth grade (Ekstrom et al., 1987). The literature has also noted that many of the common characteristics may be visible in the early primary school years (Ekstrom et al., 1987).

Research shows that most dropouts come from low-income or poverty settings, have low basic academic skills especially in reading and math, show limited aspirations and low self-esteem, and perceive that they have little control over their future. Observations of older aged students further show that dropouts tend to have been retained at least once during their school career; are often older than their classmates; they

generally have changed schools more often than other students, and they lack a strong feeling of belonging to a school. Retention in grade once increases the chances of not finishing school by forty to fifty percent, while being retained in two grades increases the risk to ninety percent (Mann, 1986).

Research also shows that the tested achievement levels of many dropouts ranked seven to twelve percentiles higher than their grades. This suggests that some students do not leave school solely because they cannot do the work or because they do not want to complete their education, but are entrapped in a "cycle of failure" not entirely of their own making.

While there are countless reasons why students drop out of school, by far, the most common reason cited is poor academic performance (DCPS, 1988). Other factors affecting the in-school experience which leads to the eventual dropping out are a school atmosphere stressing silence, order, control and competition which are often incompatible with the behavior and learning styles of many at-risk children (Hodgkinson, 1985; Tuck and Boykin, 1988). Thus, rebellion, marked by frequent expulsion, suspension, truancy and in-school delinquency is another major reason why many students, particularly male students, drop out of school.

Work and economic factors are also reported to contribute significantly to the dropout problem whereby many students leave high school to go to work in support of their family of origin or their own family. This is particularly true for males. Often, many urban students know only of low-status, dead-end employment and are therefore, not motivated to believe full-time employment will be forthcoming or fulfilling. They do not consider a high school diploma worth the effort (Hahn et al., 1987). While many students drop out of school with the intent of improving their economic condition, the majority are finding opportunities to be greatly limited. Thirty-six percent of the high school dropouts are unemployed as compared to twenty-one percent of high school graduates not enrolled in college (U.S. Department of Labor, 1983).

The at-risk youth experience little success in school and they frequently leave before receiving their high school diploma. Oftentimes this happens because teachers and counselors are slow and ill-prepared in adjusting to the needs of students.

The major question of this research study is, "Can teachers in urban junior high schools be motivated to work with at-risk youth and if so how can this be done?" The data to answer these questions will be gathered from

conferences with teachers and students, results of a student questionnaire, student interviews and classroom observations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research literature in the following areas supported the staff development project by establishing certain propositions or assumptions for this project: (A) at-risk youth and those who leave school prior to graduation, (B) academic learning time, (C) effective schools, (D) staff development, (E) teaching/learning styles and use of individualization. School change involves so many variables that cannot be controlled or defined. Hence, efforts at school improvement should build on the rich and growing knowledge base.

First, earlier studies suggest good program procedures and promising ideas. Second, they also suggest intermediate or indirect measures of possible gains. Thus, although student achievement is an obvious and ultimate goal for any school improvement project, existing studies have identified certain factors or characteristics which can feasibly be observed and documented that are ordinarily associated with enhanced student learning.

This study aimed to enhance characteristics of effective schools as identified by Ron Edmonds and

collected evidence of teacher involvement in planning activities (Sarason, 1982). Effective use of academic learning time in junior high schools can improve performance of students at-risk. What students learn in school and whether they want to continue in school depends in large measure on what happens in classrooms. Before teaching, an examination of at-risk students and what is known about their development and learning may suggest ways to meet their needs. Similarly, there must also be some understanding about interventions to educate them in any endeavor or innovative treatment.

"At-risk" appears to be the latest semantic label of American education attached to several groups of students who have experienced difficulty or, in fact, failure in their careers as learners. Historically, other labels have been associated with these same populations: culturally deprived, low income, dropout, alienated, marginal, disenfranchised, impoverished, underprivileged, disadvantaged, learning disabled, low performance, low achieving, remedial, urban, language-impaired, etc. Obviously, many concerns are mirrored in each group label and chances exist there would be great difficulty in characterizing a typical member of any particular group (Rumberger, 1987).

Students who come from poverty-stricken economic backgrounds endure social and familial stress characterized by a lack of control over their lives; have a dim perspective of their future purposes; and lack a sense of personal worth and self-esteem in school (Steinberg, et al., 1981). Frequently, these youngsters are racially, linguistically, or socially partitioned from the mainstream or majority culture population. They are a vulnerable underside of a complex, sometimes callous or naive society (Steinberg et al., 1981).

At-risk students come from a low socioeconomic background which may include various forms of family stress or instability. If they are consistently discouraged by the school and see the institution's discipline system as both ineffective and unfair, then many students will become alienated and uncommitted to getting a high school diploma (Wehlage, Rutter, and Turnbaugh, 1986). This would lead to another very serious problem - students dropping out of school.

A disproportionate number of dropouts are male, some are older than average for their grade and are likely to attend urban public schools. They come from low-income, often single-parent families and many have mothers who work outside the home. At-risk students have had fewer opportunities than their classmates for learning outside of school. Thus, their grades and test scores are low.

They seldom read or do homework, have more disciplinary problems in school and tend not to take part in any of the extracurricular activities in school. (Strother, 1986).

Most at-risk children are low-achievers, lack adequate support services and environments, fall behind academically and ultimately drop out of school (Odden, 1986). For every grade failed, the probability of dropping out of school in a later grade increases by forty to fifty percent; failing two grades increases the dropout probability by ninety percent (Mann, 1986).

Students who leave school before graduation and at-risk students tend to be alienated from schools and social organizations. Most have disengaged themselves from both the affective and cognitive elements of the school culture. At-risk students in any grade tend to achieve below expected grade level standards, have failed courses on their record, are in remedial or low academic tracks, and have poor academic self-esteem (Wehlage, 1987).

School related factors associated with students dropping out have received considerable attention, particularly because many of these factors are ones that can be manipulated through practice and policy. School improvement plans, in-service training and staff

development can make a positive difference in the education of these children (Borus and Carpenter, 1984).

The research literature shows that the relative economic disadvantage to dropping out of school will get worse. The skill requirements of many jobs will be altered due to increased use of new technologies. Without a sound, basic education, early school leavers will be less able to learn new skills and adapt to a changing work environment, thus becoming even less employable (National Academy of Sciences, 1984).

Research on academic learning time is best used to draw attention to the underlying mechanisms which produce achievement in classrooms. Adequate time must be provided for instruction to occur, but available time must be filled with content that represents important pieces of the curriculum, and students must be given a high quality of opportunity to learn the content (Wyne and Stuck, 1982).

The opportunities students have to learn are shaped by the tasks teachers require them to accomplish. Teachers establish academic tasks by defining the products students generate, the cognitive operations they are to use in accomplishing work, and the resources available to them. Tasks are driven in large measure by the teachers' accountability system, which defines the

significance of different assignments and the criteria applied to judge adequacy of products.

Time-on-task is not the same as time on the right task. Time-on-task is synonymous with engagement in relevant tasks only when the task content has been controlled (Fisher and Berliner, 1985). Tasks emphasizing higher level thinking are often difficult for teachers to manage in classrooms, because of the reactions of students to ambiguity and risk which necessarily accompany this form of work. Hence, improving academic quality of secondary schooling requires careful planning, dedicated teachers and administrators and a supportive instructional climate for improving.

Research on teaching, especially the teaching of basic literacy and computational skills in elementary and junior high schools, has established support for a direct structure and explicit approach to instruction. Direct instruction of this nature has the following essential features (Brophy, 1979, p. 78):

1. Goals of students' learning are made clear. Schools should focus on goals they deem most important and continually monitor pupil and classroom progress toward those goals.

2. Progress through tasks is carefully organized and sequenced. Effective planning is done with an emphasis on student needs.

3. The teacher clearly explains and illustrates what students are to learn. Time is taken when needed to be sure students clearly understand the objective.

4. The teacher frequently asks direct questions to monitor students' progress and check their understanding. Good questioning techniques are used to maximize teaching and learning.

5. Students are given ample opportunity to practice with prompts and feedback to insure success and to correct errors. A time at a school is set for practice. Practice is also given for homework.

6. Students work with a skill until it is over-learned or automatic. All skills are taught as if they were of equal importance. All must be learned.

7. The teacher reviews regularly and holds students accountable for work. A time is set aside for review. Review is also given for homework.

Students learn more, in other words, when teachers give rich instructional support and many opportunities to receive help on the way to mastery. Classrooms that contain these conditions of instruction are also typically well established, and inappropriate and disruptive student behaviors are kept to a minimum (Brophy, 1983; Sanford, Emmer, and Clements, 1983; Clements and Worsham, 1984). Research in secondary classrooms by Emmer and his colleagues (Emmer, Evertson, Sanford, Clements, and Worsham, 1984) indicates that good classroom management begins on the first day of school, with a clear statement of rules and expectations for

behavior, the introduction of procedures for routine classroom functions, careful monitoring of student compliance to rules and procedures, and early interventions to stop misbehavior when it occurs. In addition, effective managers establish a smooth-running system of activities to organize students for work on academic tasks, and carefully look over and protect this activity system from disruption as they move students through the curriculum (Doyle, 1980; 1984). Classroom managers organize both student behavior and curriculum to create a functioning system for accomplishing academic work.

During the past eight years, related terms such as active learning time, time-on-task, or engaged learning time, allocated time, opportunity to learn and academic learning time have become concepts that have redirected much of the earlier research of school and teaching effectiveness to focus on the teaching-learning process and its determinants. Pupil's time-on-task or active learning time determines his or her achievements. Experiences and activities of pupils play the central role in learning. If pupils do not participate in the activities intended to educate them, they cannot learn (Harnischfeger and Wiley, 1985). (see Table 3)

Table 3 Academic Learning Time

ACADEMIC LEARNING TIME

The amount of time a student spends engaged in an academic task that can be performed with high success

ENGAGEMENT RATE

The percentage of time a student appears to be paying attention to the task

ALLOCATED TIME

The amount of in-school time a student has available to work on academic content area

SUCCESS RATE

The degree to which a student grasps the task and produces correct responses

ON-TASK INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Interactive	Non-Interactive
Review/Discuss Previous Work	Written Work
Objectives (long & short range)	Silent Reading
Inform/Instruct New Concept	Teacher Monitoring/Guiding
Demonstrate/Give Examples	
Link to Prior Knowledge, Oral Drill	
Question/Check for Understanding	
Reteach Small Group, Evaluate	

Active participation is not new. Twentieth-century psychology has been marked by an emphasis on the activity of the learner. Over 30 years ago Tyler (1949, p. 63) wrote, "Learning takes place through the active behavior of the student; it is what he does that he learns, not what the teacher does."

The centrality of the pupil's participation in the learning process does not imply that it is sufficient to restrict one's attention to that participation only. All of the activities of educators whether they are administrators, teachers, or support staff, are focused on creating and improving that participation. Thus, those activities must be scrutinized in terms of their relations to pupil participation and through that participation, to achievement.

These relationships constitute the commonality of view in work by Carroll, Bloom and Harnischfeger and Wiley. The consensus of the three studies was pupils' experiences adequately plumbed by the amount of time spent actively learning, and pupils' characteristics, including their cognitive capabilities, are the sole proximal and distinctive determinants of achievement. Instruction influences active learning directly through the allocation and use of instructional time and indirectly through pupil motivation (Harnischfeger and Wiley, 1978). This consensus, which now forms the

conceptual base for much practice-relevant research on school learning, has several distinct components:

- Pupils' participation and pupils' prior characteristics are the sole causes of achievement.
- Experience or participation is adequately summarized by a pupil's active learning times.
- Opportunity to learn and motivation are major determinants of participation.
- Opportunity is controlled by the allocation and use of available instructional time.
- Motivation and other factors that transform opportunity to active learning are strongly influenced by instruction (Harnischfeger and Wiley, 1985, pp. 133-136).

Decisions and actions that enhance pupil participation by augmenting active learning time and that devote that time to specific achievement goals and objectives are important levers for increasing achievement and apportioning it across subject areas. Carroll (1962, 1963) was the first to develop a model of school learning in which time played the major role. In Carroll's model, achievement or the degree of learning has two direct determinants: actual time needed for learning and time actually spent in learning.

An important feature of Carroll's model is that these time variables are both defined in terms of the

learner's active learning--not elapsed time or allocated by a learner to complete the task, but rather that part of such time which is actually spent on learning.

Instructional processes as represented by teaching materials and activities can only affect achievement in three ways (Carroll, 1963, p. 138):

1. Achievement may enhance understandings of the demands of learning tasks, that is, communicate what the learner is to do or to accomplish. This will reduce the time needed for learning.

2. It can make available and allocate times for specific learning activities or tasks. This apportions total instructional time among potential tasks and creates the framework within which pupils may actively learn.

3. It may improve task involvement, engagement, or attention, thus increasing perseverance. This will augment that portion of time allowed for task learning which is actively devoted to learning - thus creating active learning time. (p. 138)

What has been learned from the classroom research of the 1970s and 1980s can be useful to guide instructional practices in the 1990s. Keeping students on-task is not a simplistic notion; it is a rather complex undertaking to make this construct useful in the classroom.

The issue of time and how it is spent has many dimensions that are important for school improvement and staff development. Within subjects taught are activities that occur (i.e., making assignments, written work,

silent reading, instructing, etc.). Within each activity is the focus of the teacher's attention (i.e., an individual student, youths at-risk, a small group, the total group, etc.), and when the teacher is engaged with students, how does the teacher interact with them (Anderson, 1981). Another concern is how does the teacher address the issues of learning styles and teaching styles to meet the needs of his\her students.

The amount of time students actually spend on the academic tasks provided is determined in part by the difficulty level of the task, the activities selected for the class period, and the nature of the teacher's interactions with students. The mix of activities and the time allotted for each activity should vary for different subjects and for different achievement levels of students (Anderson, 1981).

The variation in the amount of student-engaged time by achievement groups was reported by Evertson (1980). On the average, low-achieving junior high students were engaged forty percent of the time in academic activities compared with about eighty percent engaged time for high-achieving students. The low-achieving students experienced less variation in the activities that occurred during the class period and had more "dead time" (nothing happening) than did the more able students.

Even though high-achieving students are more inclined to be engaged in academic tasks, it is of considerable importance to allocate sufficient time and effort working with low-achieving students who may not be so inclined (Evertson, 1980, p. 286)

Academic learning time concepts are designed to help teachers use classroom time effectively and increase their students' time on task. The basis for Academic Learning Time rests on a study conducted by the Far West Labs for the California Commission for Teacher Preparation 1972 through 1978. The purpose of this study was to identify classroom conditions and activities that fostered student learning. Some of the things found were:

1. The amount of time that teachers allocated to instruction in a particular curriculum content area is positively associated with learning in that content area.

2. Teacher's ability to prescribe appropriate task is positively related to student achievement and student success rate.

3. More substantive interaction between teacher and students is associated with higher student engagement, thus achievement (Fisher and Berliner, 1985, p. 14).

In summary, policies and procedures both in classrooms and in schools that advocate effective use of

academic learning time can have a positive effect on at-risk youth. This occurs when the curriculum content is logically related to the criterion and is at an easy level of difficulty for each student. In the conception of research on teaching, the content area the student is working on must be specified precisely, the task engagement of the student must be judged, the level of the difficulty of the task must be rated, and time must be measured. The constructed variable of academic learning time, then, stands between measures of teaching and measures of student achievement (Berliner, 1979).

Rutter (1979) found that in addition to work norms that reinforce beginning classes on time, not wasting class time, effective planning and effective use of instructional time to meet the needs of all students, school process had important effects on student outcome measures. These were issues looked at for Hart Junior High School's improvement plan for staff development.

Individualization of Instruction

When instruction is individualized, learning tasks, instructional tasks and instructional conditions are adapted to the abilities, accomplishments, and interests of different students. In contrast to the group-paced instruction, students in individualized programs often

follow their own curriculum and time schedule, and they spend most of their time either in small groups or by themselves with self-instructional materials. In many instances, individualized programs incorporated a learning-for-mastery format in which all students are required to achieve a criterion level, but time necessary to reach the criterion is allowed to vary. In a mastery format, goals are explicit, the sequence of instruction is thoroughly structured, and testing and feedback are frequent. Many mastery programs rely more on group instruction rather than private self-instruction (Kulik and Cohen, 1979).

Some investigators have reported impressive results for mastery programs (Block and Burns, 1976) and individualized programs at the college level appear to be quite effective (Kulik and Cohen, 1979). Studies at the secondary level are less encouraging. Bangert and Kulik (1983) synthesized findings from 51 studies comparing individualized instruction, which often included a learning-for-mastery format, with conventional teaching in secondary courses. (In the secondary studies reviewed by Block and Burns, both experimental and control groups learned from self-instructional materials and no comparison with conventional teaching was made). Bangert and his colleagues concluded that individualized

programs, in comparison with whole-class teaching, have only slight effects on achievement and no significant impact on the self-esteem, critical thinking, or attitudes. The reviewers suggested that secondary students, in contrast to college students, may need more guidance, support, and external pacing work than individualized programs typically afford them.

Slavin, Leavey, and Madden (1984) have recently devised a system called Team Assisted Individualization in which students work together on individualized material and their performance contributes to team scores. In addition, students correct one another's work so that teachers can have more time to instruct small groups or work with individuals.

There are three important considerations in making decisions about individualized instruction. First, in practice, individualized programs are effective to the extent that they arrange time and classroom conditions so that all students receive basic instructional support: specify clear goals, explicit teaching, and opportunities for guided practice and feedback. There is less reason to believe that adapting to particular student characteristics, such as attitudes, preferences, and personality styles will enhance achievement (Good and Stipec, 1983). Second, adaptation sometimes results in

substantial differences in curriculum across ability levels. As a result, lower achieving students are often given little opportunity to learn what their higher ability peers learn. Finally, teachers often find difficulties in managing complex arrangements and time flow problems associated with individualized instruction in classrooms (Good and Stipec, 1983).

Since the mid-1960s, public concerns over how to use educational opportunities for (low-income) poor, minority children has led to a concentrated effort by educational researchers and other social scientists to identify characteristics of schools and classrooms that help improve learning and achievement. Schools must teach all children according to their needs and not fail to provide a vast number of low-income and minority students with decent schools and skills.

There are so many inequalities in education and the consequences are drastic if the problem is not resolved. For example, the problem is not so much that schools have short-changed those students at the top, but that schools have so completely underserved those students who are so desperately in need of help on the bottom.

If education were constructed around social needs of children, families, communities and a democratic society, then the priority would be to endow all children with the

basic and higher-order skills needed to fulfill personal and citizenship roles. The mission of schooling would be individual and social empowerment, which itself would promote more equitable opportunities to flourish in the labor market.

Much of the scholarship and research on individual differences over the last fifty years has been devoted to increasing our understanding of the ways people differ and to determining educational treatments most appropriate for differences believed crucial to learning. Youth who are at-risk benefit when individualization becomes a part of the teachers' total instructional strategy. This literature was beneficial to the case study because teachers learned that individualization was only one means of addressing the needs of at-risk youth, not the total answer.

Teaching/Learning Styles

Learning style is the composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment. Learning style is demonstrated in that pattern of behavior and performance by which an

individual approaches educational experiences. Its basis lies in the structure of neural organization and personality which both molds and is molded by human development and the learning experiences of home, school, and society (Keefe and Languis, 1983). Learning style is also defined as that set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others.

Learning style suggests the patterns in which people tend to concentrate best--alone, with others, with certain types of teachers, or in a combination thereof. It suggests the senses through which people tend to remember difficult information most easily--by hearing, speaking, seeing, manipulating, writing or note-taking, experiencing, or again, a combination of these. Learning style also considers motivation, on-task persistence or the need for multiple assignments simultaneously, the kind and amount of structure required, and conformity versus non-conformity levels.

Chronobiology is also part of style. Some people cannot function well at the same time of day during which others are at their best.

Responsiveness to these variables triggers students' concentration and gets them ready to learn. How they actually process the information they need to master is

called their hemisphericity. Some people refer to hemisphericity as left/right, others call it analytic/global, inductive/deductive, reflective/impulsive, and so forth. They are referring to that component of learning style that educational psychologist call cognitive style.

Extensive research documents that statistically higher test scores, improved attitudes toward school and learning, and reduced number of discipline problems result when students are taught through their personal learning style strengths. Research from more than forty graduate institutions of higher education in the United States verifies the differences that exist among students; and many well-conducted, experimental studies demonstrate how well the same youngsters learn when they are taught correctly (for them) and how poorly they learn when they are taught through methods that do not complement their styles.

A number of studies conducted during the last decade have found that students' achievement increases when teaching methods match their learning styles--biological and developmental characteristics that affect how they learn. Every person has one or several preferred learning styles (Dunn, 1988). In Table 4, children were taught with multisensory resources, but initially

Table 4 Perceptual Learning Styles

RESEARCH DATE	SAMPLE	SUBJECT EXAMINED	PERCEPTUAL PREFERENCE EXAMINED	SIGN. EFFECTS ACHIEVEMENTS/ ATTITUDE
Carbo 1980	Kindergarten	Vocabulary	Auditory, visual "other" (tactile)	+ +
Jarsonbeck 1984	4th grade underachiever	Mathematics	Auditory, visual tactile,	+ +
Kroon 1985	9th, 10th graders	Industrial Arts	Auditory, visual tactile, sequenced	+
Martini 1986	7th graders	Science	Auditory, visual tactile	+
Urbschat 1977	1st graders	CVC Trigram Recall	Auditory, visual	+
Weinberg 1983	3rd graders	Mathematics	Auditory, visual tactile	+
Wheeler 1980	Learning disabled 2nd graders	Reading	Auditory, visual tactile, sequenced	+

(+) = SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE FINDINGS
Experimental Research Concerned with Perceptual Learning Styles
(Dunn, 1988)

through their most preferred modality and then were reinforced through their secondary modality. Students achieve higher test scores in modality-matched, rather than mismatched, treatments (Dunn, 1988).

A number of researchers and practitioners are now advocating that students at academic risk are more likely to flourish in the enriched curriculum typically reserved for able students. Too many at-risk youth have felt alienated in their classrooms being made to feel that they were not an important member of the class.

Underachieving students are likely to be taught by less-experienced teachers with fewer pedagogical strategies and given mindnumbing worksheets that stress isolated skills without providing opportunities for students to apply them to authentic problems. Slower learners are taught at a pace that puts them even further behind their classmates. Teachers use a "watered-down" curriculum with the at-risk (Oakes, 1985). Remedial students who are given access to an accelerated or advanced curriculum learn more than students stuck in the slow track (Peterson, 1989).

Research on learning styles has been conducted at more than 60 universities over the past 10 years. Findings show the effects of environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological, and cognitive preferences on the achievement of students.

Students who know their learning styles have a measure of control over the events of the classroom. Teaching to learning style differences reinforces that sense of control. Research evidence indicates that when teachers begin to adjust instruction to diagnosed learning style differences, academic achievement increases, attitude toward learning is more positive, and fewer discipline problems occur (Keefe, 1985).

This literature impacted on this case study. First, knowing students' learning styles, teachers could organize instruction in response to needs. Second, the information was helpful in staff development by comparing teaching styles to learning styles. Third, the literature helped teachers to see why children learn some tasks and not others.

Effective Schools

The effective schools research has become both the basis of new theory in education and the ideology of a movement seeking school improvement and greater equity in educational attainment. Research demonstrates that some schools which serve disadvantaged populations in urban areas are unusually effective in raising the achievement levels of their students. The primary significance of

this effective school research lies in the strong suggestion that schools can reduce, to a considerable extent, the dependence of student performance on family background. The most popular statement of this research, the so-called Five Factor Theory, indicates the following:

- Strong administrative leadership by the school principal, especially in regard to instructional matters.
- A school climate conducive to learning; that is, a safe and orderly school relatively free of discipline and vandalism problems.
- School-wide emphasis on basic skills instruction (which entails acceptance among the professional staff that instruction in the basic skills is the primary goal of the school).
- Teacher expectations that all students, regardless of family background, can reach appropriate levels of achievement.
- A system for monitoring and assessing pupil performance which is tied to instructional objectives (Edmonds, 1979).

These factors imply that a school is likely to be effective if the principal and instructional staff agree on what they are doing, believe they can do it, provide an environment conducive to accomplishing the task, and adjust their performance on the basis of assessments of their effectiveness.

Effective schools are described as being different from schools in general. They are more tightly managed. Their curriculum, instructional practices, and tests are more carefully aligned and their work directed toward agreed-upon goals. Such schools reduce the effects of socioeconomic background on academic achievement. They are schools which make greater demands on their students, with policies and practices which reduce the influence of social environment and peer culture on student behavior and academic performance (Mackenzie, 1983).

Other empirical research and studies of successful practices have revealed a set of variables that characterize schools that are instructionally effective with students from low-income families--potential dropouts. These variable are (Mann and Lawrence, 1983):

1. Caring and dedicated teachers;
2. Parental involvement;
3. Strong administrative leadership;
4. School learning climate;
5. Instructional emphasis; and,
6. Pupil progress measurement.

While some factors contribute more than others, an effective school cannot be achieved by the presence of

only one or two factors. Effective schools provide variation in activities including a variety of programs that go beyond basic or fundamental skills to areas of high interest and demand.

Research on effective schools highlights the importance of commitment to basic skills as instructional goals. Both lines of research stress the need for an orderly, businesslike environment which permits teachers and students to devote their time and energy to teaching and learning academic content. Both support the notion that successful instruction is, in part, a function of teachers' belief that such success is possible for themselves and for their students.

Staff Development

"Probably nothing within a school has more impact on children, in terms of skills development, self-confidence, and classroom behavior, than the personal and professional growth of teachers" (Barth, 1980; p. 147). Staff development is defined as deliberate learning activity that has as its focus empowering teachers to effect improvement of policy and curriculum development and teaching with a view to providing better student outcomes (Owen, 1988).

Empowerment can be thought of as a mediating variable between professional development (as the independent variable) and the development of policies and programs and the use of better and more appropriate teaching techniques (the dependent variables). Enhancing empowerment is based on an assumption that teacher acquisition of knowledge and skill ultimately influences student outcomes through changes in schools (Owen, 1988).

The issues and problems surrounding the at-risk population are numerous and complex. There are no easy answers. Skilled and knowledgeable professionals are required to meet the challenges. Schools and school systems must provide personnel who work with at-risk young people with developmental training opportunities in such areas as teaching strategies, positive discipline techniques, establishing cooperative learning versus competitive learning environments, group counseling procedures, and motivational techniques.

When reaching out to at-risk students, teachers must be at their best. They must feel good about themselves and their profession and they must feel confident in their command of the latest knowledge in their teaching field and about student development. They must be enthusiastic about their subject matter and about

teaching and learning in general if they are to reach potential dropouts.

This leads to the essential and central role of strong administrative involvement in providing better programming and services for at-risk students. This involvement may range from providing staff development at the local school to supporting faculty attendance at workshops and conferences within the school system.

Research into the areas of school effectiveness and school improvement are becoming increasingly convergent and more sophisticated and specific in identifying the characteristics of schools that lend themselves to the successful use of educational ideas (Hopkins, 1990). Staff development and successful school improvement are related. Staff development includes any activity or process intended to improve skills, attitudes, understandings, or performance in present or future roles (Little, 1990).

Effective staff development is directly related to the commitment and support provided by the principals in schools and is enhanced through collaborative leadership. It provides teachers with ready access to and development of relevant internal and external support services.

The principles are predicated on the reality that change requires backing from those who exercise power

within a school. An element of good leadership is to enable participants to feel a substantial degree of ownership and commitment to change will result from in-service activities. Teachers need to be involved in decisions about their professional development activities, because in the long term they will be responsible for the implementation and continuation of the learning from these activities (Owen, 1988).

School leaders must show initiative in deciding priorities for professional development of the staff; that is, professional development becomes a whole-school issue rather than an issue concerning the individual teacher.

Staff development is derived from school priorities and addresses teachers' perceived needs. This is predicated on the assumption that in-service education should help teachers and others in schools to solve problems that they encounter in their work.

Effective professional development recognized the contribution that innovation-focused and action research delivery models make to teachers' learning and balances and supports these modes over time. It includes material (content, teaching strategies, etc.) responsive to established and new knowledge fields and provides for participation in developments regarding them.

In-service training occurs when the design provides for recurrent participation of the learners. The implementation of this principle allows opportunities for reflection and feedback. This is predicated on the assumption that participants learn by applying new knowledge and skills, that theoretical inputs must be accompanied by the opportunity to put such inputs into practice, and that the sharing of practice by participants further enhances learning.

The Case Study Method of research was very appropriate for this project because effective professional development uses the school as its major focus because of its pivotal role in the development and application of ideas and the practice and sharpening of skills. The implication of this principle is that professional development should relate closely to the participants' own work environment.

This case study looked at the research literature on at-risk youth, academic learning time, effective schools, staff development, individualization and teaching and learning styles. The data show that the at-risk population has continued to grow at an alarming rate throughout the country and especially in urban schools. These young people most often leave school early without a diploma. Schools must address the need of these youth,

especially junior high schools where the largest number of youths leave. Staff development for teachers trained them on the effective use of academic learning time using a variety of teaching strategies. Through the schools improvement plan effective school characteristics were studied and adopted.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Research Methodology

This was a case study that identified through observations and staff development, varied instructional styles of teachers in the effective use of academic learning time with youth at-risk in an urban junior high school and how these youth perceived their teachers. This method of research was chosen for several reasons. First, a case study is an empirical inquiry that (Yin, 1987): investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and, in which multiple sources of evidence are used. This proved very effective for this study, staff development on academic learning time for at-risk youth. Second, the results of case studies are of special interest to the teachers who shared similar concerns with the researcher. Case studies have special relevance for classroom teachers. The researcher, being an educator, is able to share common concerns with teachers. Collaboration exists between the teacher and researcher, almost like a

partnership. This collaboration becomes extremely important in school improvement programs and when conducting staff development. Third, case study research methods are intrinsically democratic; teachers do not need special training to be able to understand the results of such research. The researcher believed that it was important that educators investigate their own practice systematically and critically, by methods that were appropriate to their practice.

Procedures

There were basically two procedures used for this case study. First, the project consisted of selecting youth and teachers for the study. The youth were selected from a list of identified at-risk children. The teachers were volunteers. Second, the procedure for systematically collecting information was done through classroom observations, teacher conferences, student interviews and a student questionnaire. This procedure was used in an effort to gather unbiased, reliable, and accurate information.

A staff development session was held on Tuesday, September 5, 1989. At this meeting, information and literature were shared with a faculty of 75 teachers on

the subject of at-risk youth. During the 1988/1989 school year, a survey was done to determine what concerns the staff had. The staff had, overwhelmingly, expressed concern over the increasing number of at-risk youth in the school and how best to meet their needs.

The survey administered to staff was a part of the annual end of the year School Improvement Plan's assessment. Staff members were surveyed to determine the areas of concern they had toward making improvements for the coming year. An evaluation of all staff developments sessions is performed at the end of each year and recommendations are made for the subsequent year. The School Improvement Team makes recommendations to the school principal based on the needs assessment. The concern with the highest priority becomes one of the staff development goals for the upcoming school year.

The survey instrument indicates several concerns that have come up during the year from a suggestion box kept in the main office. Concerns are also expressed by teachers at the monthly faculty meetings. In addition to the concerns listed on the survey, staff members can write additional concerns on the survey instrument (see Table 5).

Table 5 Needs Assessment

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
601 Mississippi Avenue, S. E.
Washington, D. C. 20032

June, 1989

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

On a scale of one to five with one indicating the greatest need and five the least for conducting staff development sessions, the following concerns were rated. Staff could add additional concerns and rate them based on priority. Only one additional concern was added that was a consensus of the staff.

CONCERNS	PRIORITY RATING
A. Student Attendance	Rated #2
B. School Climate	
C. Safety	Rated #4
D. At-risk Youth	Rated #1 by 95%
E. Discipline	Rated #3
F. Learning Centers (Added On)	Rated #5

In summary, the concern expressed at the September 5, 1989, staff development session was: schools today are faced with a major challenge, in that, almost one-third of the nations's elementary and secondary students are educationally disadvantaged/at-risk (Chief State School Officers, 1987). A student described as at-risk is one whose participation in school is marginal and who will ultimately fail to satisfy his/her graduation requirements.

Risk factors include low achievement, multiple retentions, poor attendance, behavior problems, low socioeconomic status and low self-esteem. At-risk students are the students who have negative experiences in and negative attitudes toward school. Many reject school discipline policies and believe their teachers are not interested in them. Others read below grade level, have low test scores, and have been retained in a grade. The fact that so many students fail to attain critical skills reflects, not necessarily, the incapacity of the students, but the incapacity of schools to meet the needs of every child. Based on the criteria for at-risk youth, Hart Junior School has approximately two hundred and fifty students in this category.

It was at this point the researcher shared the case study project with staff and asked for two volunteers

from each major department to work with him. The major departments were chosen because this was where over 90 percent of failing grades occurred. Eight teachers seemed to have been the maximum number the researcher could work with in order to have a manageable study. The first eight teachers to volunteer represented two from each of the following disciplines: mathematics, English, social studies, and science.

All of the teachers had advance degrees (Masters) and had taught an average of 14.2 years. The years of teaching were: math teachers 12 and 15; English teachers 18 and 10; science teachers 12 and 17; and social studies teachers 16 and 18.

The researcher got cooperation from the teachers as the result of several factors. First, it was on a volunteer basis. These teachers asked to be a part of the case study after the staff development session on at-risk youth. Second, staff development sessions were held during school time. Third, a partnership of cooperation, collaboration and trust was established among all participants including the researcher. Fourth, the participants had a vested interest in the success of the study. They would be responsible for conducting staff development training on findings from the study with their peers.

There were four staff development sessions held, once every eight week period, for an hour: Tuesday, September 3, 1989, Thursday, November 9, 1989, Friday, January 26, 1990, and Friday, March 16, 1990. The November session was presented by one of the study's participants on instructional and learning styles. The following information was shared with teachers: students are individuals and each learns by means that are appropriate for him/her. Also, teachers feel more comfortable using certain teaching techniques. Teachers need to understand how students learn, how using varied instructional styles based on the learning styles of youth maximized learning, how students learn best, and what strategies can be used with individual students to increase their academic performance. The staff development presented teaching and learning styles that would enhance the instructional program for at-risk students. The workshop began with an oral introduction and explanation of different teaching styles of instructors and learning styles of students. Following this was a film demonstrating teaching techniques used by different teachers with disadvantaged inner city youth. At the conclusion of the film teachers were placed in groups of three to analyze the strategies used in the film and modify them to fit the needs of Hart Junior High

School. The principal participated in the task as a third person for one of the groups.

An English teacher participating in the study gave a staff development session presenting the following information:

1. Definition of academic learning time;
2. Time allocation for maximizing instruction;
3. Research on indicators of effective teachers;
4. Concepts on the Academic Learning Time Model;
5. Planning procedures; and,
6. An instrument for determining time off task.

After providing teachers with handouts and verbally communicating basic information on academic learning time, the teachers were given classroom simulations to critique and evaluate. The session concluded with participants making a list of things they would no longer do and a list of things they would start doing in order to use academic learning time more effectively. Each participant chose a teacher, obtained that teachers permission, and used the instrument for determining time off task for students. Each participant was also to try this method on each other.

The March staff development session dealt with student perceptions of their teachers, whether it was a result of effective use of academic learning time, instructional style of the teacher, or another factor the student had perceived. The researcher shared with teachers written and recorded responses from students participating in the study on how they perceived their instructors' teaching styles, their effective or ineffective use of academic learning time and how they perceived the teachers' relationship with them. In addition to sharing what they perceived existed, students shared how they would have liked for things to have been. The teachers analyzed the student comments, discussed alternatives, and made recommendations. Names of students and teachers were kept anonymous.

The staff development sessions aimed to show teachers that varied instructional styles in the effective use of academic learning time supported successful teaching and learning of all students, but especially those who were at-risk. Thus, certain learning situations call for different teaching strategies and the at-risk youth may need a variety of teaching styles to match his/her learning preference. The researcher was also attempting to improve instruction by providing teachers with current research and literature that would assist them in developing effective

instructional programs. Teachers would also have the opportunity to practice what was learned.

Student Orientation

An orientation session was held with the seventy-five students on September 26, 1989. The purpose was to explain the case study research project, solicit their support and cooperation, and answer any questions they may have had. Students were told about concerns the faculty had involving students who had not been academically successful in school and who were at risk of not finishing because of poor achievement, absenteeism, and other problems impacting on their continuation. The study was to make their educational experiences more successful and positive and the data would be used to assist and support other at-risk students. Students were told that their support, cooperation, and participation would help other young people like themselves, and hopefully reduce some of the educational dilemmas (ineffective use of academic learning time, ineffective teaching, lack of school support, poor achievement) they have had to cope with. Parental permission to participate in the questionnaire was also discussed (see Appendix E).

The research utilized the following methods to gather data: questionnaires, interviews, observations, and conferences. Each is discussed in detail.

Questionnaires

The content of the twenty item questionnaire was a result of concerns, interests and complaints of at-risk students from Hart Junior High over a two year period. The questions were open ended and the investigator did not have preconceived answers.

Research literature on academic learning time, effective teaching, at-risk youth, and students who leave school prior to graduation were also incorporated into the design of the questionnaire. The researcher hoped to learn about the use of academic learning time with youth at-risk, what happens in classrooms that causes students to stop attending school or drop out, what impact does the teachers' instructional style have on the student, and how at-risk youth perceive their teachers. Part I of the questionnaire had six questions which asked for personal data on each individual student. The purpose of this part was to validate the participant as being at-risk based on the definition presented in Chapter I. It was also designed to relax the student by making the questionnaire a little more personal.

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher on Wednesday, October 18, 1989, to seventy five students in a classroom at school. Each participant was required to have a signed parental permission letter on file with the researcher. In an effort to rule out any misinterpretation or comprehension problems and to help those students who had problems reading, each question was read aloud by the researcher.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted twice with each student. The purpose was to get the student's perception of his/her teacher, facts about his/her teacher's style of teaching and how academic learning time was used in the classroom. The interviews were open-ended and conducted once in October, 1989, and again in February, 1990. Data was collected using a tape recorder and note-taking. Students agreed to the use of the recorder. They were assured that names would not be used and would be kept confidential. The procedure was that each student would have a schedule when to meet with the researcher. They would be notified the day before as a reminder. At the scheduled time, the student would report to the principal's office and meet with the

researcher. Interview sessions were for thirty minutes. The recorder was used because it gave a better rendition of the conference. It also limited misinterpretations on the part of the researcher.

Observations

Observations were done once a week on each teacher over a six month period by the researcher. They were done on the following dates in 1989: September 19th, 21st; October 3rd, 5th, 17th, 19th; November 14th, 16th, 28th, 30th; in 1990 they were held on January 9th, 11th, 23rd, 25th; February 6th, 8th, 29th, 22nd; and March 6th, 8th, 20th, and 22nd. The observations were for a minimum of forty minutes. The researcher looked for basically four things:

1. Instructional styles used by the teacher;
2. Effective use of academic learning time;
3. Time off task, (see Appendix C for manual); and,
4. Students' interactions with their teachers.

At the end of the observation the researcher would converse with students who were participating in the case

study in an effort to get their perceptions of their instructor's teaching style during that lesson. (see Appendix C for observation instrument)

The time off task instrument was selected for use because it gave the researcher data that could be shared with teachers and students on the amount of time that was wasted academically when students were not working on task. The results were intended to be used as an incentive in getting students to stay on task in using academic learning time effectively.

There are two types of observations used in the District of Columbia Public School System: formal and informal. The formal observation process is a contractual agreement between the Board of Education and the D. C. Teachers' Union. This observation uses a standard form and certain criteria must be adhered to. The results of the formal observation becomes a part of the teacher's annual rating. In some instances, teachers look upon this process as one that is threatening.

The informal process is less threatening and does not affect the teacher's annual rating. The ultimate goal of both observations is to examine what is happening in the classroom from a teaching and learning perspective and to improve the quality of teaching and learning processes.

The purpose of the Informal Observation Form for this research was to observe specific behaviors within the teaching/learning process as they related to this study.

Teachers participating in this research knew that the following areas and only these areas were looked for in every observation: task objective, instructional style used, students' response to the instructional styles used, and the use of allotted academic learning time.

Conferences

Following each observation there would be a post conference between the teacher and the researcher to review the findings. Before reviewing the researcher's notes, the teacher would first elaborate on how he/she saw the lesson and why he/she saw it that way. The students' perception of what took place in the classroom would be shared with teachers next. Teachers would have an opportunity to get feedback from students and then they would review the observational notes of the researcher. The conference sessions were held for approximately thirty minutes at the end of the school day.

The open dialogue between the teacher and observer was one of sincerity and honesty on the part of both. The observations were non-threatening to the teachers and students. The teachers understood that they were working with the researcher in an effort to improve the quality of instruction for at-risk youth.

The case study was designed to use classroom observations, teacher conferences, student interviews, and questionnaires to obtain information for staff development, in an effort to motivate teachers in working with at-risk youth in the effective use of academic learning time. The questionnaire instrument was developed because of the concerns Hart's at-risk students had about their education (or lack thereof). The purpose was to get students' perceptions of their schooling and of their teachers.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

This study documented processes to introduce varied instructional styles of teachers in the effective use of academic learning time with at-risk youth in an urban junior high school and how these youth perceived their teachers. The at-risk student at Hart looks very much like at-risk children in national studies. The higher the rate of absenteeism, the lower the grade point average of the students. All of the at-risk youth with similar levels of absenteeism also had similar grade point averages -- regardless of whether they had been held back a grade or not. Frustrated by a traditional instructional climate, students increasingly stayed away which subsequently led to low grades and failure.

Analysis of the findings represent a combination of information obtained from several different sources which were presented earlier. For the purpose of analyzing data and reporting the findings, the following groupings were used: math teachers 1 and 2, English 3 and 4, science 5 and 6 and social studies 7 and 8.

On September 19, 1989, the researcher observed mathematics classes. Class 1's findings were: whole

group instruction on adding fractions with unlike denominators, lecturing by teacher, seventy-five percent of the time the teacher talked (researcher used watch for timing) and an assessment was given at the end of the lesson. The students stayed on task fifty percent of the time as measured by researcher using the time off task instrument. This instrument was used because it accompanied a time off task manual which was given to all teachers (Appendix C). Results of the test were shared with the researcher and seven of the twenty-two students tested passed by a score of seventy or better. When asked about their performance, students stated that they did not understand the process of adding unlike fractions.

The findings for Class 2 indicated, there was whole group instruction, lecturing, and cooperative learning. The teacher talked fifty percent of the time. Three students, identified as being at-risk, were separated and placed in groups with students of different ability levels, (researcher checked students cumulative records to determine ability level). An assessment was given at the end of the lesson. Students stayed on task seventy-five percent of the time as measured by the researcher using the time off task instrument.

Results of the test indicated that thirteen of twenty students passed by a score of seventy or better. The researcher talked to students after the class and they indicated (the ones who had passed) that they learned easier when the teacher went from whole group instruction, at the beginning of the lesson, to cooperative learning. In fact, two of the students stated that they did not understand how to work the problems, even after the teacher had showed them how, until their classmates showed them how to do the process for adding unlike fractions. Five students who failed the test said they were not paying close attention to the teacher when the lesson was being introduced. The other two students who failed said they just did not understand.

On October 5, 1989, science classes were observed by the researcher. In class 5, the teacher used whole class instruction, lecturing, cooperative learning, and peer teaching to cover drugs and the digestive system. Higher level thinking skills were incorporated into the lesson and students asked many questions -- in directing interest in the topic. Time on task was eighty-five percent, as measured by the time off task instrument. Students were grouped for their activity and a peer teacher was assigned to each group. Many activities

required hands-on applications. Students held positive views of their teacher. Several stated that they enjoyed going from the large group at the beginning of the lesson to small groups and being able to help one another.

The teacher in class 6 used whole group instruction, lecturing, and individualization as instructional styles. The lesson was on bacteria and experimentation. The time on task was sixty-five percent as measured by the time off task instrument. Four students identified as being at-risk did not participate in any of the discussions and were not called on for answers. Observation showed that they stayed off task fifty-five percent of the time. Responses from students after the class were that they did not understand how to do the experimentation. Their perception of their teacher was that she never called on them -- assuming their ignorance. If they asked her a question she would show anger.

In the social studies classes, teacher 7 used whole group instruction, individualization, and lecturing four out of eight times observed (researcher recorded styles observed on each visit). At-risk students responded that they did not understand the instructions on three occasions. One student in class 7 stated he did not like classes where he had to sit around the whole class period and listen to someone talk. Six students asked to be

transferred to class 8. Observations of class 8 revealed the following instructional styles: whole group instruction, lecturing, small group projects, cooperative learning, and team teaching. These were observed over a six month period. Conferences with students in this class indicated that they enjoyed the variety (different approaches) their instructor used in teaching. There were six identified at-risk students in this class and four of them were doing average work or better (as measured by teacher's instruments, such as test scores, class participation and class work). The students also indicated that they enjoyed the team-teaching approach with another social studies teacher (the other teacher was not a participant in this study). Teacher 8 talked fifty percent of the time as measured by clocking done by the researcher.

Varied instructional styles were used in English class 3: cooperative learning, peer teaching, lecturing, whole group instruction, and individualization. Six at-risk students (underachievers) were paired with students of average or greater performance. Observed over a six month period, the students stayed on task an average of eighty percent of the time, as measured by the time off task instrument.

English teacher 3 was observed on January 11, 1990. He had been evaluated as an effective teacher by his principal and had been used on two occasions to give demonstration lessons to his colleagues in the District of Columbia Public School System. Teacher 3 used several methods of presenting material: lecture, demonstration, textural reference, student conferencing, and teaching. This included a variety of activities; individual and group projects, ranging from the replicative to the highly creative. He gave his students many opportunities for hands on experiences in his instructional approaches. Conferences with this teacher revealed that as a student his teachers used a variety of instructional styles in teaching him. He felt that his teachers had been outstanding in their instructional approaches. A study that was done showed students learn in many different ways, while teachers often teach as they have been taught (Dunn and Dunn, 1978).

Students' perception of their teacher were the following: four students indicated that teacher 1 was the best they had ever had because he cared about them, three students said the classes were always interesting and exciting, the six at-risk students told the researcher that you can not fail in teacher 1's class because he found a way to teach and to help everyone

pass. Twenty out of twenty-three students indicated that because of the way teacher 3 instructed, they enjoyed the class and performed at a passing level or better.

English teacher 4 was observed on January 11, 1990. The following instructional styles were observed: whole group instruction, lecturing, and individualization. During the first three months of observations on teacher 4, she relied solely on large group instruction and lecturing. Students' time on task during this observational period was sixty percent, as measured by the time off task instrument. Responses from students indicated that the class was boring. Everyday they were taught the same way as before. Students liked going to this class because it gave them an opportunity to see and talk to their friends. In four classes where students responded positively toward the instructional styles of their teachers, students stayed on task seventy-five percent or more of the time, as measured by the time off task instrument and recorded over the six month period. Sixty-five at-risk students responded positively about the instructional styles of their teachers where four or more different styles were being used.

The usage of varied instructional styles increased by two in classes math 1, science 6 and social studies 7, after the staff development session on November 9, 1989,

entitled Instructional Styles. This was measured using the observational reports of the researcher. English teacher 4's time on task for her students increased from sixty percent to seventy percent, as measured by observational reports of the researcher, after a January 26, 1990, staff development session entitled Academic Learning Time.

Questionnaire/Student Perceptions

The questionnaire was administered to seventy-five at-risk children from a total population of one thousand students. The seventy-five had been identified as being most at-risk from this population. They were 7th, 8th, and 9th graders. Some were retained in two grades, whereas others were retained as many as three times (see Table 6).

The study showed the following information: thirty of the seventy-five students who participated were females, eighty percent of the students were retained twice and twenty percent were retained at least three times. This information was very critical because the most prevalent cause of dropping out of school was because of failure or doing very poorly academically.

Table 6 Questionnaire Responses

This questionnaire was administered to 75 junior high school students identified as being at-risk. The results are indicated below. The percentages represent those student responses for each question. Seventy two students responded to all questions. Two students responded to sixteen questions and one student to seventeen questions.

Directions: Part II asks for your views about the impact academic learning time has on your achievement and how you feel about your educational experiences. Answer each question by placing a circle around the correct response.

4 = Always
3 = Most of the Time
2 = Sometimes
1 = Seldom
0 = Never

		4	3	2	1	0
1.	I feel that finishing high school is very important.	86%	6%	4%	-	4%
2.	I experience success in my instructional program.	13%	60%	20%	7%	-
3.	My teacher is very concerned about my school work and encourages me to do my best.	67%	13%	17%	3%	-
4.	I feel better when my teacher works with me individually.	40%	33%	23%	4%	-
5.	I enjoy working with other students on class projects.	40%	20%	20%	7%	13%
6.	When I attend school I feel out of place.	20%	-	20%	7%	53%
7.	I believe that my teachers do not really care if I work in class or not.	10%	6%	13%	27%	44%
8.	I have thought about dropping out of school.	13%	3%	3%	4%	77%

Continued next page

Table 6 continued

9.	I feel that I can ask teachers for special help with my assignments.	43%	17%	30%	3%	7%
10.	Class time is spent on discipline or behavior problems.	10%	17%	23%	30%	20%
11.	I do better in my work when I work at my own pace.	53%	20%	23%	4%	-
12.	When I get upset or frustrated there is a teacher I can talk to.	27%	10%	23%	13%	27%
13.	My teachers make me feel that I am important as a person.	33%	30%	30%	3%	4%
14.	Failing in school makes me want to give up.	17%	10%	17%	17%	39%
15.	I receive counseling at school.	13%	17%	30%	20%	20%
16.	My school and classes seem to be too crowded.	13%	7%	23%	7%	50%
17.	My teachers keep me busy the entire time I am at school	40%	27%	20%	13%	-
18.	My classmates make me feel a part of the class.	40%	30%	17%	10%	3%
19.	I feel uncomfortable answering questions in class.	13%	3%	40%	10%	34%
20.	There are too many distractions in my school that keep me from concentrating on my lessons.	17%	17%	37%	13%	16%

Research has shown that thirty percent of dropouts leave school during or before the tenth grade. When students experience multiple retentions, the chances of them dropping out are increased considerably.

Teachers felt that the staff development sessions, post observation conferences, and ongoing dialogue between them and the researcher were instrumental in changing their attitudes and perceptions of teaching at-risk youth. Seven of the eight teachers felt that as a result of this study the principal was more accessible to them which gave a sense of moral support.

Twenty-three percent of the students studied said they had thought about dropping out of school. Characteristics of these students included being older than their classmates, they had been retained at least once during their school career, they had changed schools more often than other students and they lacked a strong feeling of belonging to the school.

Conferences with the student participants revealed that their academic success was very important to them. When they felt good about themselves, they tended to do much better in their school work and in their behavior. When they failed in school, whether it was directly by not passing courses or indirectly by passing from one class to the next, but without significant learning, the development of their self-esteem was severely affected.

The questionnaire, Part I, also showed that about eighty percent of the youth qualified for free lunch. This indicated that the social economic status of these families was at or near the poverty level. Thirty-seven of the youth were 9th graders; thirty were 8th graders; eight were 7th graders; and, sixty-five students expected to finish high school. Thirty-four of the students wanted to attend college; thirty-one did not and ten were not sure. Sixty-five of the students had poor attendance with an average attendance rate of less than fifty percent.

Questionnaire Implications

The final section of the questionnaire revealed the following responses from students. The implications are presented here. The following paragraphs are numbered to correspond with the order of the statements on the questionnaire and all percentages have been rounded.

1. Eighty-six percent of the students indicated that finishing high school was very important. The implication here is that the majority of youth at-risk realize the importance of finishing high school. Since the dropout rate in the DCPS is

approximately forty-five percent, then something negatively happens either during the time these students are in school or during their personal lives that causes almost half of them not to finish school.

2. Sixty percent of the students had perceptions of having experienced success in their instructional program most of the time. From their perspective, they have received some gratification in their school experience. However, their interpretation of success may be different from that of an educator, in light of the fact that the average retention for these students was two years. It was interesting to note that of the seventy-five students studied, none of them indicated that they had never experienced any success in their instructional program. Another implication is that these students could be receiving success in their school experience this year as opposed to prior years.

3. Sixty-seven percent of the questionnaire participants agreed that their teacher was always concerned about their school work and encouraged them to do their best. An additional thirteen percent said their teacher was very concerned most of the time. These are encouraging results to

educators even though too many students feel that their teachers are not concerned about their school work.

4. Responses to statement four shows a greater spread in responses. The results indicated forty percent always felt better when the teacher worked with them individually, thirty-three percent said most of the time and twenty-three percent said sometimes. This indicates that all of the students desired individual help at least sometimes and it varies to what degree. This could also be interpreted to mean that to be singled out for attention is often unpleasant.

5. On this question forty percent indicated they always enjoyed working with other students on class projects, twenty percent said most of the time and another twenty percent said sometimes. This indicates that cooperative learning would be a preferred learning style enjoyed by eighty percent of the students. Thirteen percent preferred not to work with other students on class projects. These students' learning preferences should be addressed to provide the optimum atmosphere for teaching and learning. Another implication is that the thirteen percent has not learned the skill of working with others.

6. Fifty-three percent of the students answered never to the statement: When I attend school I feel out of place. This indicates that more than half of these students feel comfortable in the school atmosphere and with effective instruction stands a good chance of succeeding in school. The disheartening results, however, are the twenty percent who always feel out of place when at school and another twenty percent who sometimes feel out of place. The effective use of their academic learning time will be paramount to their success or they could leave school without a diploma. Another implication is that the twenty percent who always feel out of place could be those who are continuously overlooked by the school and not made to feel that they are an integral part of the school.

7. Forty-four percent of the student participants never believed that their teachers did not really care if they worked in class. This indicated that these students felt they had a support system. Contrary to this, almost thirty percent felt, at varying degrees, that their teachers really did not care if they worked or not. The implication here is that these students perceived that their teachers'

expectations of them were very low and as a result of this, they would need positive reinforcement to assist them in being successful. This feeling causes them to feel alienated and they become strong candidates for not finishing school.

8. Seventy-seven percent of the students indicated they had never thought about dropping out of school. This implies that these students have had some successes and their desire and belief in finishing school is still positive or it could mean that they have not yet reached legal age. Thirteen percent always thought about dropping out. This implies that these students are extremely at-risk and are in desperate need of a support system and on-going monitoring. It could also indicate that these students are failing which is one of the leading causes for students to drop out of school.

9. About ninety percent of the students felt they could ask their teachers for special help with their assignments. This indicates that students realize that teachers are there to help them and that they can call on them as the need arises. A concern is, if so many students feel that they can ask their teachers for help, then why has their failure rate been so high. The implication here could be that

the help that is given may be in the same style and mode that the student had trouble with in the first place, thus still presenting a lack of understanding.

10. Responses to the questionnaire that class time was spent on discipline or behavior problems was almost evenly distributed which indicates that each of the students had their own personal experiences which varied. Almost fifty percent of the students felt that class time was spent on discipline problems. The implication is that too much time is spent on discipline and not enough on instruction.

11. With varied degrees, all of the participants felt they did better in their work when they worked at their own pace. The implication here is that the students preferred less stressful climates without the competitive pressures of meeting a time frame.

12. The percentages for this question were almost distributed equally: When I get upset or frustrated there is a teacher I can talk to. Twenty-seven percent said always and twenty-seven percent said never. The implication here is that those students who have someone to talk to will more than likely do so when the need arises and could get the counseling and assistance needed. Contrary to this, the other

twenty-seven percent did not feel that they could go to a teacher for counseling.

13. Over ninety percent of the students felt that their teachers made them feel important as a person. The implication here is that the students, possibly, had experiences with their teachers where mutual respect was shown. This also indicates that the students' self esteem has been enhanced through the teacher/student relationship. Another implication is that students feel that teachers are doing something right!

14. Fifty-six percent of the students studied felt that failing made them want to give up in school. Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between students' success rate and their achievement (Fisher and Berliner, 1981). The implication here is that these students could have had fewer opportunities to experience success. Students should have an eighty-five percent success rate. Too many students (44%) are willing to give up when they have not been successful or are experiencing school failure.

15. The distribution of percentages is almost equal for receiving counseling at school. The greatest concern would be for that twenty percent who said

they never receive counseling and the twenty percent who said they seldom receive it. These groups are serious candidates to leave school without benefit of a diploma. At-risk youth need on-going monitoring and counseling.

16. Fifty percent of the students felt that their classes never seemed too crowded. The implication here is that these students felt comfortable in their learning environment. However, forty-three percent felt that at varied times, their school and classes seemed to be too crowded. This implies a sense of alienation and not belonging. A smaller class size permits a level of personalizing instruction which would be beneficial to at-risk youth. The implication is also that these students perceive the classes/school to be too crowded, whether they really are or not.

17. Over eighty percent of the participants felt their teachers kept them busy the entire time they were at school. The implication is that the students were kept busy, however, there is no indication as to whether the work met the needs of the students or if it allowed the students to experience a high success rate.

18. Over eighty percent of the students felt their classmates made them feel a part of the class. This

implies that the students felt good about their peers and their relationships with them, even though in most cases the at-risk youth were much older.

19. At varied percentages, over fifty percent of the students felt uncomfortable answering questions in class. This indicates that they could lack self confidence and/or cognitive skills appropriate for the different questions being asked. It could also indicate that these students have had negative experiences answering questions before. On the other hand, thirty-four percent never felt uncomfortable answering questions in class. They could have had more positive experiences. Their skill level could be higher and their confidence level probably much higher as well.

20. The percentages were almost evenly distributed for students who felt that there were too many distractions in their school that kept them from concentrating on lessons. However, the alarming statistic was that at varied degrees, seventy-one percent of the students who were studied indicated that there were too many distractions. At-risk students can be easily distracted from their instruction and teachers and principals need to be cognizant of this when operating classes and

schools. Also, at-risk youth have short attention spans that can be affected by the least amount of distraction or interruption of the instructional program.

In summary, the implications from the student responses on the questionnaire indicated that most of the students felt that an education was important. The results of this questionnaire supports the study that ineffective use of academic learning time impacts negatively on the at-risk youth. The summary findings included or were based, in part, on conferences with students.

Interviews

Interviews with students were recorded on tape and transcribed in a journal. Samples of quotes were:

> "I think that students would work better if they wouldn't have pressure from a teacher but they would be more understanding."
>
> "Mrs. Par-- like some people and she work hard with them but she don't work like that with people she don't like."
>
> "My teachers don't care about my personal problems like I have a baby to take care of and my teacher could care less as long as I do my homework."

"I like Mr. W--- class cause he's big fun and the class is never boring. He always come up with different ways to teach."

"My science teacher let's everybody do what they want and a lot of time is wasted because he can't control us."

"Mrs. J--- doesn't like me because I live in valley green."

The researcher interviewed students, counted the responses and the following are the most common findings: twenty students felt that teachers were not sensitive to their personal problems that interfered with their learning, sixty-five students felt that when teachers used different teaching approaches the lessons became easier and more enjoyable, twenty-eight students felt that too much classroom time was wasted and used ineffectively by students and teachers, ten students stated that teachers should individualize their lessons more so that students would not feel that they are in a competition with one another, sixteen students stated that teachers should not look down on children who are from the poorer neighborhoods, forty-five students felt that many of their teachers had low expectations for them, fifty-eight students felt most of their teachers really cared about them and about their progress, seventy students felt that tutoring and earlier intervention on

the elementary level would have helped them tremendously, all of the students felt that parents and teachers should work closer together, sixty-seven of the students felt teachers should call parents more often when students were absent excessively from school, sixty-nine students felt that teachers should give more praise and encouragement and all of the students felt that schools should have an alternative program within the neighborhood school for helping students who are experiencing academic or social problems.

Sixty-five of the students interviewed felt that an increase in the amount of personal and individual attention given to youth who are at-risk of failing or dropping out of school would be of great help to them. Students felt that the attention they were getting through this study made them feel good and recommended similar programs where at-risk children could feel important; a program like the cooperative learning approach that some of their teachers used.

Staff Development

Most staff and students are strongly affected by the climate and norms of a school (Sarason, 1982). Getting staff to buy into a plan that will improve the climate of

the school and serve its students more effectively has been a goal of Charles Hart Junior High School.

One component of Hart's school improvement plan is to use academic learning time to improve the achievement of at-risk students. The ultimate responsibility for change and improved teaching effectiveness rests at the school level, where the most pressing needs can be addressed in an intensive manner. Through collaborative efforts such as: teachers buying into the concept that schools can make a difference, teachers volunteering to work in this case study and giving of their own personal time, teachers being open for constructive criticism in an effort to improve their instruction with at-risk youth and teachers agreeing to volunteer more of their time next school year to provide staff development and support to the remaining staff, shows that school improvement efforts can be successful.

Teachers played a central role in defining the basic goals, structure, and programmatic content of the school's improvement plan. Members were given key roles as group leaders, presenters, organizers and planners, in the development and implementation of the plan.

At the beginning of the school year, September, 1989, one component of the schools' plan began. A staff development session allowed teachers to share mutual

concerns they had as well as concerns of the District of Columbia Public School System related to the high drop out rate for youth who were at-risk and the impact it had on Hart's student body. Research on youth at-risk indicated the general nature of the problems and their impact on Washington, D. C.'s youth.

Staff development focused on defining and understanding at-risk youth, knowing how at-risk students learned best, effectively using academic learning time with at-risk youth and motivating these students to want to be academic achievers. Other objectives included:

- To increase the effective use of academic learning time
- To enhance instruction using varied instructional styles (cooperative learning, team teaching, coaching, peer assisted instruction, individualizing instruction, lecturing, etc.)
- To improve the academic performance of all students, especially those who are at-risk.
- to increase students' self esteem.

There were seventy-five teachers in attendance at the at-risk staff development. An evaluation tally was done and the results (see page # 128) indicated that the session was rated excellent overall.

The second staff development session was on November 9, 1989, and introduced information on varied instructional styles. A video was shown on various instructional and learning styles. This allowed teachers to observe an educational setting similar to theirs and presented instructional strategies and techniques they could use in their class settings. The evaluation (see page # 129) was rated outstanding.

The third staff development was conducted on January 26, 1990, on the effective use of academic learning time. Teachers simulated real class like situations and critiqued them. The records showed teachers how allotted academic time was wasted each day. Several instruments were shared with teachers on how to assess time off task (see Appendix C). The evaluation (see page # 130) was rated excellent.

The fourth staff development session presented teachers with their students' perception of them. Tape recordings of interviews with students were shared (names were kept anonymous) giving teachers a student's perspective of what was happening in his/her class. An evaluation was done (see page # 131) and the session was rated very good.

Table 7 Evaluation Summary Form

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

E V A L U A T I O N

Activity: At-Risk Youth Date: September 5, 1989

Time: 9:00 a.m. Site: Hart Facilitator: Kenneth R. Milner

For each item listed below, check the appropriate box.

	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	LESS THAN ADEQUATE
o Sessions Workshop Objectives:	87.5%	12.5%		
o Content	75 %	25 %		
o Materials	50 %	37.5%	12.5%	
o Organization/ Format	87.5%	12.5%		
o Possibility for Use of Experiences	87.5%	12.5%		

Do you feel you have accomplished the stated objective?

100% indicated (yes)

What suggestions do you have for future activities?

Additional Comments:

Information will be very useful!
A Great way to start the year.
Best of Luck on the study.

Table 8 Evaluation Summary Form

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

E V A L U A T I O N

Activity: Varied Instruct. Styles Date: November 9, 1989

Time: 1:00 p.m. Site: Hart Facilitator: Deloris Kirk

For each item listed below, check the appropriate box.

	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	LESS THAN ADEQUATE
o Sessions Workshop Objectives:	100 %			
o Content	87.5%	12.5%		
o Materials	75 %	12.5%	12.5%	
o Organization/ Format	87.5%	12.5%		
o Possibility for Use of Experiences	75 %	25 %		

Do you feel you have accomplished the stated objective?

100% indicated (yes)

What suggestions do you have for future activities?

Additional Comments:

This was one of the best sessions I've participated in.
I like working in small groups!
I never really thought of students' different styles.
I enjoy meeting during school time.
Thanks for the materials.

Table 9 Evaluation Summary Form

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

E V A L U A T I O N

Activity: Academic Learning Time Date: January 26, 1990

Time: 1:00 p.m. Site: Hart Facilitator: Mary Johnson

For each item listed below, check the appropriate box.

	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	LESS THAN ADEQUATE
o Sessions Workshop Objectives:	75 %	25 %		
o Content	87.5%	12.5%		
o Materials	62.5%	37.5%		
o Organization/ Format	75 %	25 %	12.5%	
o Possibility for Use of Experiences	75 %	25 %		

Do you feel you have accomplished the stated objective?

100% indicated (yes)

What suggestions do you have for future activities?

Additional Comments:

Mrs. Johnson gave an excellent presentation.
I enjoyed the role playing.
I'll watch my time much more carefully.

Table 10 Evaluation Summary Form

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

E V A L U A T I O N

Activity: Student Percepts. of Instruct. Teaching Styles

Date: March 16, 1990 Time: 1:00 p.m. Site: Hart

Facilitator: Mary Johnson

For each item listed below, check the appropriate box.

	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	LESS THAN ADEQUATE
o Sessions Workshop Objectives:	75 %	12.5%	12.5%	
o Content	75 %	12.5%	12.5%	
o Materials	50 %	25 %	25 %	
o Organization/ Format	62.5%	25 %	12.5%	
o Possibility for Use of Experiences	62.5%	12.5%	25 %	

Do you feel you have accomplished the stated objective?

100% indicated (yes)

What suggestions do you have for future activities?

Additional Comments:

The workshop was interesting, however, students are always looking for an excuse.
It's important to get feedback from students.

Counseling and Support Services

Motivation for academic learning grows largely out of the relationships children have with meaningful, positive adults. Teachers should work well with children, acting as mentors for Hart's seventy-five at-risk youth who participated in this study. Possibly, the most critical element to success in reducing dropouts within a school is a student developing a close and nurturing relationship with at least one caring adult.

Curriculum revision and new instructional approaches are not enough; without support services, many at-risk students will leave school prior to graduation. Essential components of such support services are personal concern by at least one adult, and a high degree of involvement to establish trust and build rapport with the at-risk student.

Twenty-five staff members: three counselors, two assistant principals, the principal and nineteen teachers volunteered to work with these youth in a supportive and counseling role. Each staff member worked with three youths. Their charge was to provide guidance, monitor attendance, assist with homework and assignments and to act as a liaison between the home and school. All eight

of the teachers who participated in this research acted as mentors to the at-risk youth.

The counseling and supportive services resulted in the following findings: none of the seventy-five at-risk students dropped out during the course of this study, attendance improved from the previous year from an overall average of sixty percent to seventy-eight percent, there was an increase in parent visitation from one visit per parent for twenty-seven of the youth during the 1988/1989 school year to one visit from fifty-eight parents (during this study), academic performance improved with sixty-two of the students, as evidenced by teacher records (student grades had improved from failing in over half of their classes to passing in no less than five of six classes), and discipline problems declined with students who had caused behavioral problems the previous year. Of the seventy-five students, twenty-one had been suspended two or more times during the 1988/1989 school year. During this case study, only seven students were suspended and only two of them for more than one day.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This case study, which was a part of a major school improvement plan at Charles Hart Junior High School, provided several major findings. The staff development sessions brought teachers together in an atmosphere of collegiality and learning. Educational literature was shared with teachers on the following topics: at-risk youth, academic learning time, teaching and learning styles and students' perceptions of their teachers.

The sessions provided an opportunity for review, discussion and application of current research which was germane to each teacher's classroom situation. Staff development provided participants with an expanded repertoire of varied instructional styles that were available to them. Evaluations of the sessions indicted that teachers found them to be informative, educational and very useful. Teachers rated the staff development sessions as excellent and recommended that they continue.

The major question asked in this case study was, can teachers in urban junior high schools be motivated to work with at-risk youth, and if so, how can that be done? This research clearly showed that teachers can be

motivated to work with students who are at-risk. Staff development caused changes in the instructional delivery of all eight teachers. After the September session, participants showed a special interest in their students who had been identified as at-risk. There was a concerted effort on the part of teachers to get these youths involved in clubs, teams, organizations and other co-curricula activities. Teachers were more tolerant (than in the past) of minor behavior infractions. Instructors asked more questions concerning alternatives and assistance plans for these youths. Research indicates that probably nothing within a school has more impact on children, in terms of skill development, self-confidence, and classroom behavior, than the personal and professional growth of the teachers (Barth, 1980).

The researcher also observed that teachers were working closer with the counselors, than in previous years, on team support systems for the at-risk youth. There was an increase in varied instructional styles used after the November staff development session. A greater consciousness and effort of keeping youth on task was observed after the staff development session on effective use of academic learning time. It was observed that teachers stayed on task more frequently, also. Participants said that the staff development sessions on

how students perceived their teachers aided them in their understanding of their students' needs, enabling them to connect subject matter to student experiences.

Through observations and conferences with teachers and students, it was evident that the learning styles of students had no affect on the instructional styles of teachers before the staff development session addressing that issue. Before the session, teachers taught as though students learned in just one way. After the staff development session on teaching and learning styles, teachers used more diversity. They organized classroom instruction to address individuals' needs much more effectively.

The staff development session on teaching to the learning styles of youth provided teachers with research literature, ideas, suggestions, and activities that would be meaningful to the lives of at-risk youth. Research shows that students' achievement increases when teaching methods match their learning styles -- biological and developmental characteristics that affect how they learn (Dunn, 1988). After this session in November, 1989, teachers' plans reflected such terms as incremental learner and intuitive learner. Noticeable changes in the variety of activities presented were observed in five classes by the researcher.

In four of the eight classes observed, the curriculum that was offered to youth at-risk was different from that of the other students. The at-risk students had lessons shaped by a behavioral condition. They were taught lower-level skills with easily tested facts. Higher level thinking skills, creative and analytical thinking were not addressed, nor were these children challenged in the same manner students were who had better grades.

There was a very strong relationship between the number of varied instructional styles used by teachers and the time that at-risk students stayed on task. In four classes the teachers used as many as eight different instructional styles during the six month period. The style would vary depending on the instructional objective, lesson, and grouping within the class. Students in these classes were on task seventy-five percent of the time or more. In classes where there were three or four varied instructional styles used, students were on task an average of sixty percent of the time. Through student interviews the researcher learned that at-risk youth perceived teachers as being most helpful to them when they were kept busy with interesting assignments they could do successfully. Research indicates that successful teachers account for every

moment during the day, moving students briskly from step to step which are easily within the grasp of most students (Doyle, 1979).

The instructional style where at-risk students stayed on task the longest time (eighty percent) was cooperative learning. Here the students worked in small groups of about four to six and their grade was based on the group's performance. Students were of different ability levels and they worked together as a team with each participant member helping the other. Students said cooperative learning made them feel as if they were apart of a team and they knew that if all of them made a successful contribution, positive grades would follow.

In classes where the instructional styles of teachers were accompanied by instructors talking over sixty-five percent of the time (ex. lecturing) students were on task about sixty-five percent of the time. Students expressed concerns about these classes being boring, difficult and not much fun. At-risk students stayed on task longer in classes where the teachers talked less and the students were actively (students did most of the talking and had hands on opportunities) involved in the instructional lessons. When varied instructional styles of teachers were incorporated into the effective use of academic learning time with at-risk

youth, they perceived their teachers as being much more successful.

Implications

Ronald Edmonds asserted that: "We already know everything that we need to know in order to educate all of the children. Whether we do or do not, depends in the final analysis upon how we feel about the fact that we have not done, so far" (Edmonds, 1979: p. 16). At-risk students can be successful in the regular academic program of the school. These children fail because an appropriate quality of regular instruction is not made available to them. In classes where at-risk students experienced varied instructional styles they were more active and successful academically. When they perceived their teachers as being caring, effective, and in control of the class, the students performed satisfactorily. When at-risk students were grouped heterogeneously and given a support system, they were able to perform effectively.

Staff development improved teachers' instructional programs with at-risk youth. The quality of instruction improved, as well as, the quality of learning. Teachers infused educational research findings in their

instruction. Research on instructional time can be used to modify instructional practices, and therefore, improve schools.

The researcher found that during the six month period of this study, the seventy-five students in this research attendance had improved from an average of sixty percent (the previous year) to an average of seventy-eight percent as evidenced by records in the attendance office. It was also observed that none of the students dropped out and based on conferences with their teachers, their grades improved significantly from previous years. The implication here is that at-risk students benefit from support systems and constant monitoring. These students were made to feel important. Their attendance was monitored and they knew they were apart of an important project that could possibly help them to be more successful in school.

Recommendations

Participants in this study should become the staff development steering committee of the school improvement project for next year. These teachers will be able to conduct effective sessions based on this research study that will assist teachers in working with youth at-risk.

Problems that the participants encountered this year should be used as teaching points of the next session.

Teachers should be very knowledgeable of the characteristics of at-risk youth, their home situation and something about their past school experiences. All of this will impact tremendously on their performance at Hart Junior High School.

Teachers and school administrators need on-going professional development to acquire confidence, knowledge, and skills. School improvement efforts depend on the belief that curriculum, instruction, and social climate affect student learning. If the culture of a school is permeated with a belief that the causes of student learning lie largely outside the school, in the genes and social background of the students, school improvement efforts may appear hopeless and even ridiculous.

To improve Hart's experiences for children at-risk the teachers and administrators must also look at changing the school's culture through staff development. Research into the areas of school effectiveness and school improvement are becoming increasingly convergent and more sophisticated and specific in identifying the characteristics of schools that lend themselves to the successful use of educational ideas (Hopkins, 1990).

These characteristics cannot be imposed on Hart by edict; they have to be evolved by the school itself. If progress is to be made beyond the mechanical level of use, the concern must be made beyond the mechaanicallevel of use and the concern must be with the creation of this school acting as a place where its teachers, as well as, its students, can learn.

A separate counseling component should be added to the school improvement plan for at-risk youth. During the six month period of this research, there were numerous times that at-risk students and their teachers would have benefited from this service. There was always that possibility that these students would have stopped attending school. Collaborative efforts need to be initiated to develop and administer support programs for Hart's at-risk population. Schools, communities, churches, and families all influence what and how much students learn, as well as, whether or not they attend school.

Teachers need to have high expectations for all their students. Research consistently shows that educators who expect students to maintain high standards for attendance, academics and behavior get more in return. Every at-risk student should be entitled to access to a curriculum that is challenging and includes a

common core of knowledge for all students. This was a concern on the part of Hart's at-risk youth who felt that some of their teachers did not expect much from them and taught them differently from other students.

Getting Hart's at-risk students to come to school is important, but it is not enough just to get them to come. There must be good reasons for them to stay. Students who reach the middle or upper grades unable to read at a functional level and who have already been retained once or twice are prime candidates to leave school prior to graduation. One of the most effective ways to keep students in school is to keep them continuously learning something relevant. Students do not leave school because they do not want to learn. Everyone wants to learn if the outcome serves a purpose and the process is more positive than negative. One way Hart can begin to address this issue is by providing at-risk youth with instructional strategies that enhances their learning styles.

A number of studies conducted during the last decade found that students' achievement increased when teaching methods matched their learning styles -- biological and developmental characteristics that affect how they learn. Every person has one or several preferred learning styles (Dunn, 1988). In Table A-9, children were taught with

multisensory resources, but initially through their most preferred modality and then were reinforced through their secondary modality. Students achieved higher test scores in modality-matched, rather than mismatched, treatments (Dunn, 1988). In this study, students' perception of their teachers were positive and they stayed on task at a higher percentage when teachers used varied instructional styles matching some of the students' learning styles.

Too many at-risk youth have felt alienated in their classrooms, being made to feel that they were not an important member of the class. Several of Hart's students expressed this on the questionnaire. Slower learners were taught in four classes at a pace that put them even further behind their classmates. Teachers used a watered-down curriculum with them. At-risk students stand a better chance at flourishing in an enriched curriculum with an effective teacher.

Conclusion

Good staff development should include multiple goals, overlapping groups of teachers and students. As principal of Hart Junior High School during the past four years, the researcher generated staff development activities in order to show teachers how they could make

a difference in the lives of at-risk students. There have been several staff development projects going on simultaneously at Hart in the past year with focusing on the following areas: safe and orderly environment, high expectations for students, substance abuse symptoms, improving student attendance, mainstreaming learning disabled children, infusing values into the curriculum, and African Centered Instruction. Staff development sessions have addressed the needs of the at-risk youth, the learning disabled, the gifted and talented, and the general student population.

Research demonstrated that some schools serving disadvantaged populations have raised achievement levels for their students. The primary significance of this effective schools research lies in the fact that schools can reduce, to a considerable extent, the dependence of student achievement levels on family background (Coleman, 1981; Edmonds, 1982).

In improvement programs the local school is the unit of analysis and the focus of intervention. The staff and administration of Hart believe that all of its students are educable and their educability derives from the nature of the school.

Society has undergone dramatic and fundamental changes in the past fifty years. Hart Junior High School

has made positive strides in educating youth. However, if progress is to continue, especially with the increasing number of at-risk youth, the lack of stability in central administration, and the interference of school board members into the daily operation of schools, than collaboration as in this case study is essential. Staff development has to provide teachers with the understanding that not only can all students learn, but also that teachers can teach all of the students. When teaching styles match the learning styles of individuals, groups, and/or classes, to the level that instructional objectives can be met, than academic learning time for at-risk youth when used effectively meets the needs of many of these students.

Teachers and administrators can strengthen their efforts toward professional self-development, cooperative staff development, teacher-directed research, teacher-to-teacher critiques and instructionally centered discourse among faculty. Care and concern are characteristics found to be common among the successful programs for discouraged, marginal, or at-risk youth. A well-run school has both an orderly environment and clear expectations, but also time for individual attention and concern. Leadership is more important than extra resources or new programs, although both signal concern by the district.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

HOW EFFECTIVE USE OF ACADEMIC LEARNING TIME IMPACTS UPON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AT-RISK STUDENTS IN AN * * * * * URBAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL * * * * *

S U R V E Y Q U E S T I O N N A I R E

My name is Kenneth R. Milner. You know me as the principal of Charles Hart Junior High School. I am also a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts. This is a voluntary questionnaire which has no effect on your grades at school. The information from this questionnaire will be confidential and names will not be used in any discussion of the data. It will not be shared with others. However, in addition to being a requirement for my degree, the information could possibly improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning at Hart.

Directions: Please answer each question. Part I asks for information about you as a participant in this survey.

1. **How many times have you been retained in school _____?**
2. **What grade are you in _____?**
3. **Are you on the free lunch program _____?**
4. **Do you expect to finish high school _____?**
5. **Do you plan to attend college _____? If so, which one _____.**
6. **Do you have good school attendance _____?**

My name is Kenneth R. Milner. You know me as the principal of Charles Hart Junior High School. I am also a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts. This is a voluntary questionnaire which has no effect on your grades at school. The information from this questionnaire will be confidential and names will not be used in any discussion of the data. It will not be shared with others. However, in addition to being a requirement for my degree, the information could possibly improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning at Hart.

Directions: **Part II asks for your views about the impact academic learning time has on your achievement and how you feel about your educational experiences. Answer each question by placing a circle around the correct response.**

4 = Always
3 = Most of the time
2 = Sometimes
1 = Seldom
0 = Never

---

a.	I feel that finishing high school is very important.	4	3	2	1	0
b.	I experience success in my instructional program.	4	3	2	1	0
c.	My teacher is very concerned about my school work and encourages me to do my best.	4	3	2	1	0
d.	I feel better when my teacher works with me individually.	4	3	2	1	0
e.	I enjoy working with other students on class projects.	4	3	2	1	0
f.	When I attend school I feel out of place.	4	3	2	1	0

S U R V E Y (continued)

g.	I believe that my teachers do not really care if I work in class or not.	4	3	2	1	0
h.	I have thought about dropping out of school.	4	3	2	1	0
i.	I feel that I can ask teachers for special help with my assignments.	4	3	2	1	0
j.	Class time is spent on discipline or behavior problems.	4	3	2	1	0
k.	I do better in my work when I work at my own pace.	4	3	2	1	0
l.	When I get upset or frustrated there is a teacher I can talk to.	4	3	2	1	0
m.	My teachers make me feel that I am important as a person.	4	3	2	1	0
n.	Failing in school makes me want to give up.	4	3	2	1	0
o.	I receive counseling at school	4	3	2	1	0
p.	My school and classes seem to be too crowded.	4	3	2	1	0
q.	My teachers keep me busy the entire time I am at school	4	3	2	1	0
r.	My classmates make me feel a part of the class.	4	3	2	1	0
s.	I feel uncomfortable answering questions in class.	4	3	2	1	0
t.	There are too many distractions in my school that keep me from concentrating on my lessons.	4	3	2	1	0

Please give any other comments you wish to make.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: _____

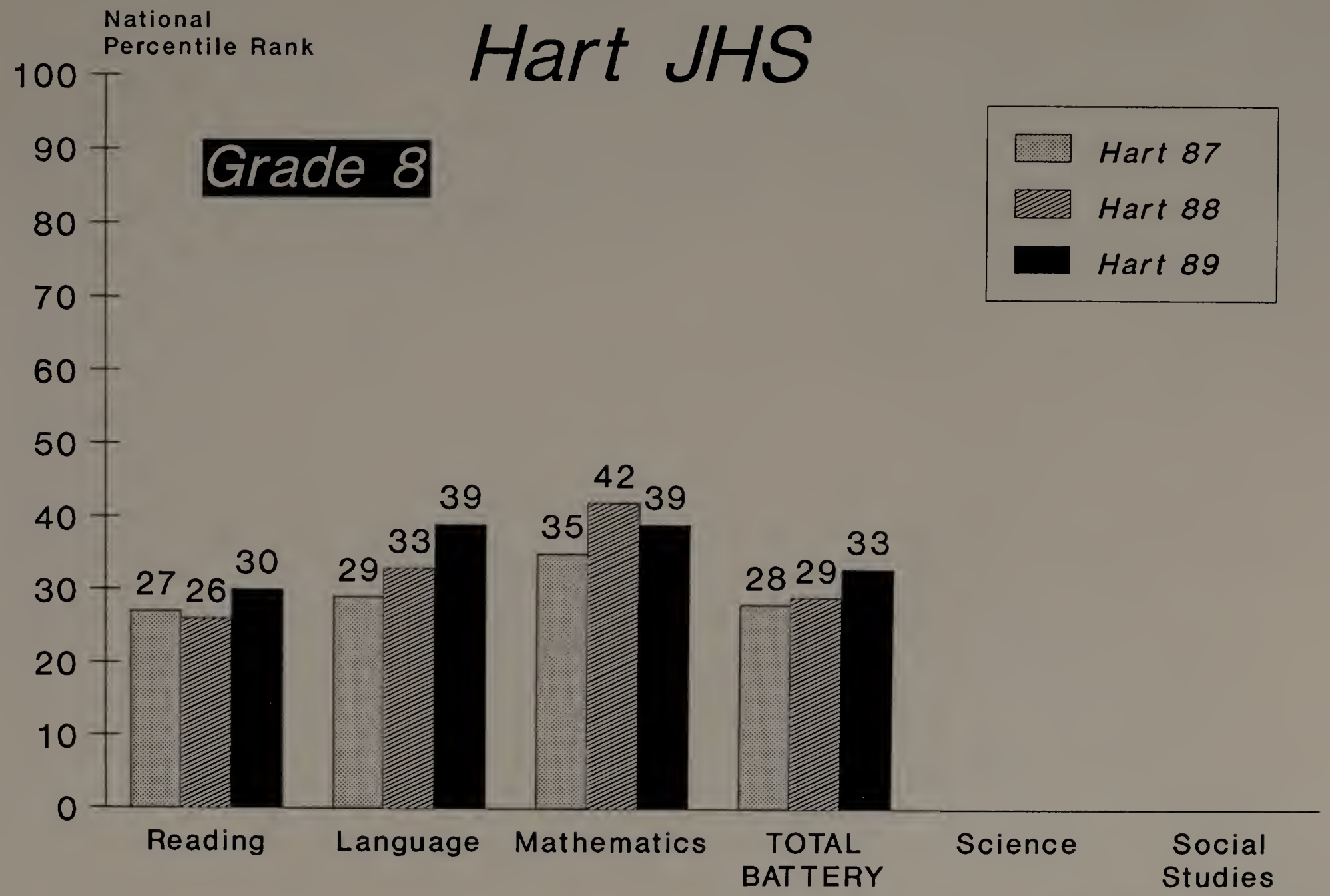
_____

A P P E N D I X B

INDEX OF GRAPHS ON CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL'S TEST SCORES

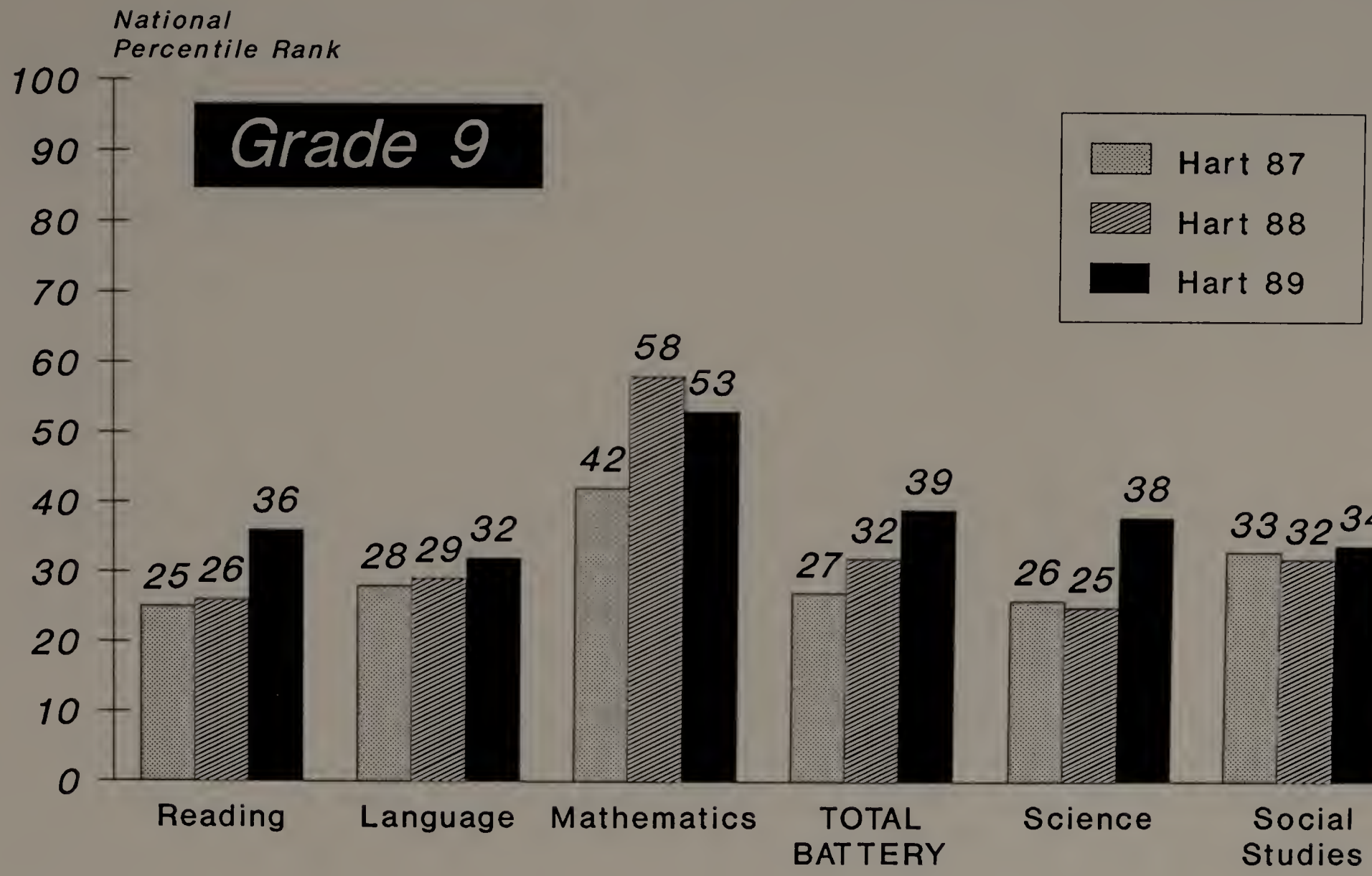
* * * *

Hart JHS



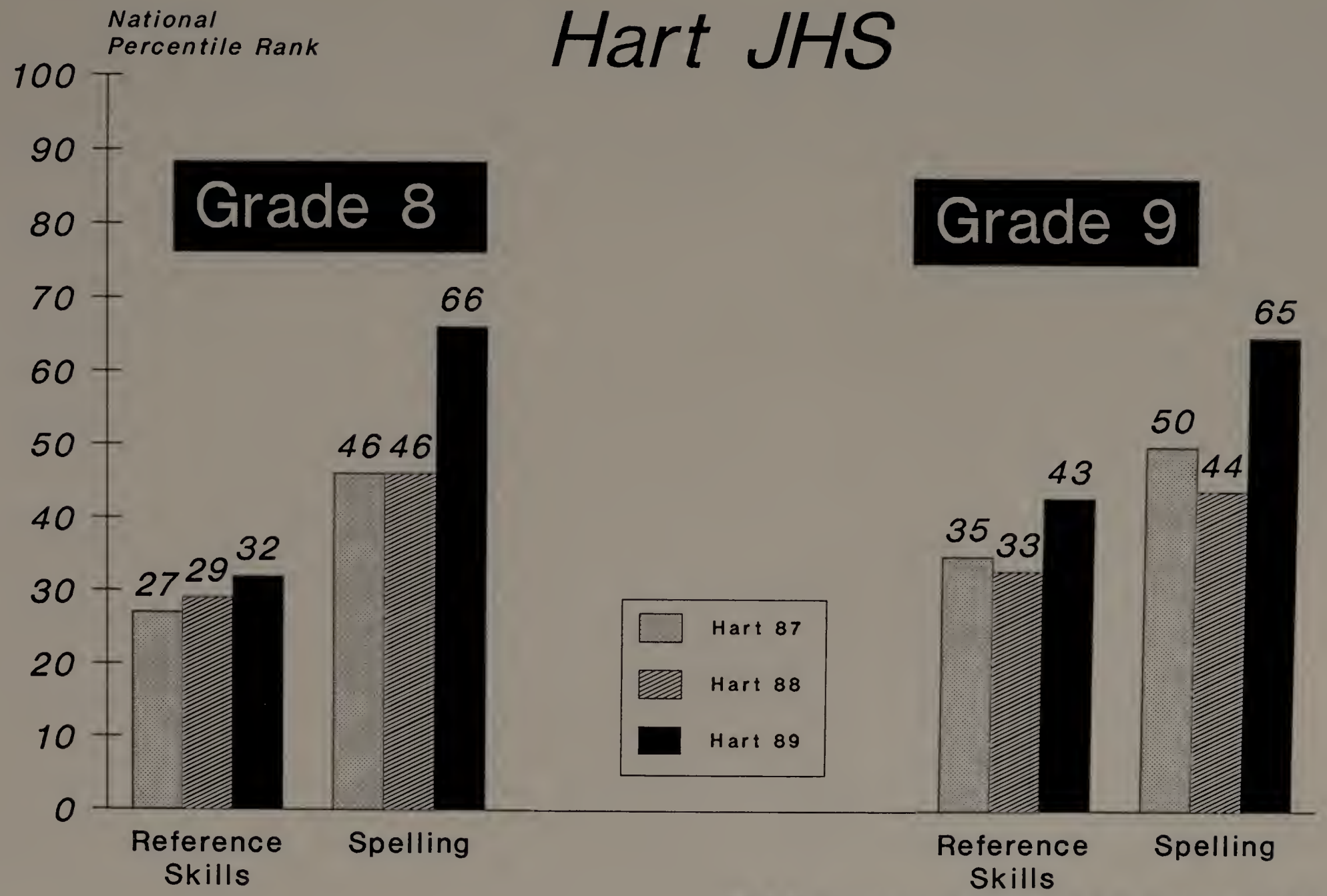
CTBS Scores Spring 1987-Spring 1989

Hart JHS



CTBS Scores: Spring 1987-Spring 1989

Hart JHS



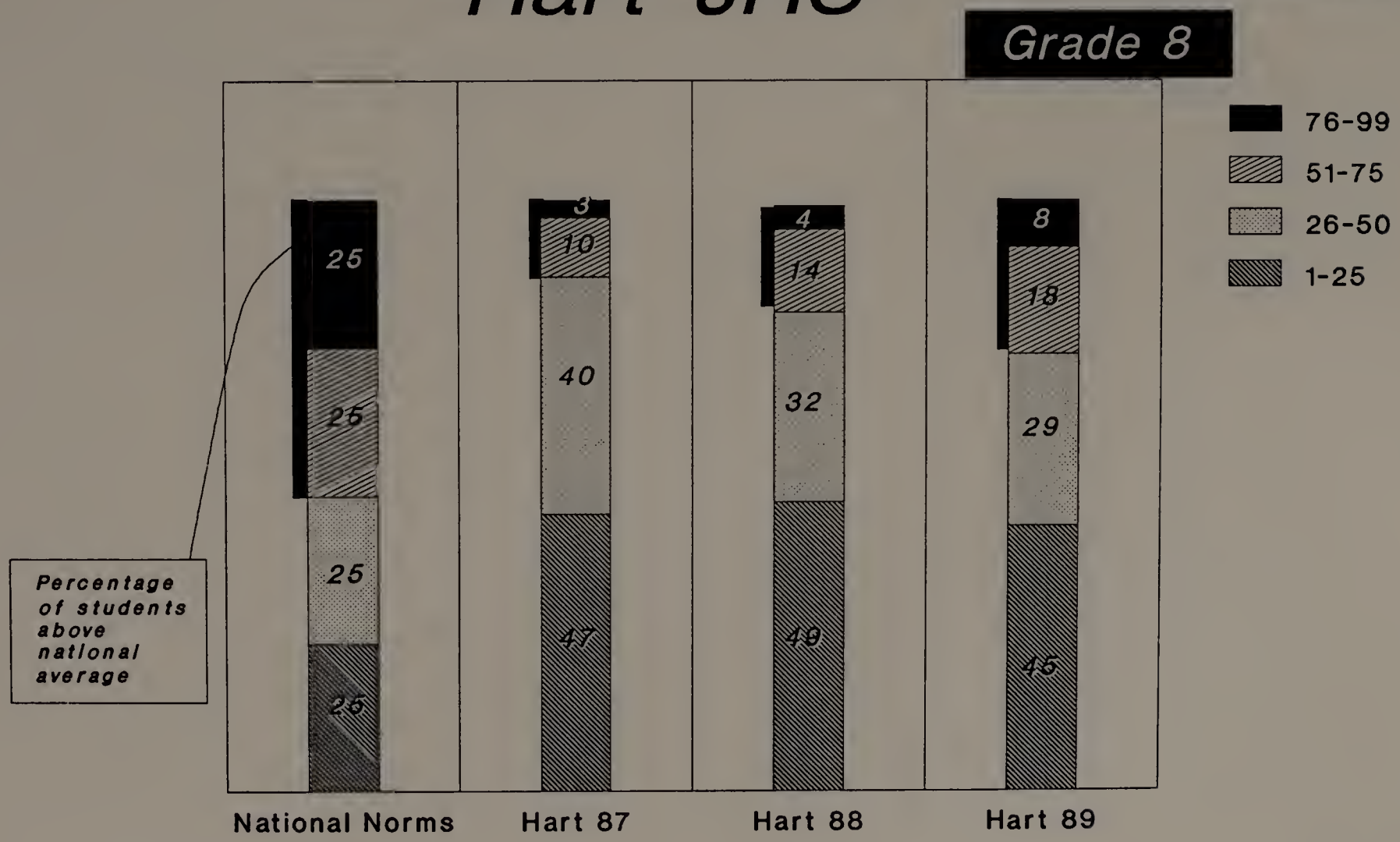
CTBS Scores: Spring 1987-Spring 1989

Percentage of Students Scoring
Within Inter-Quartile Ranges

Hart JHS

Reading

Grade 8



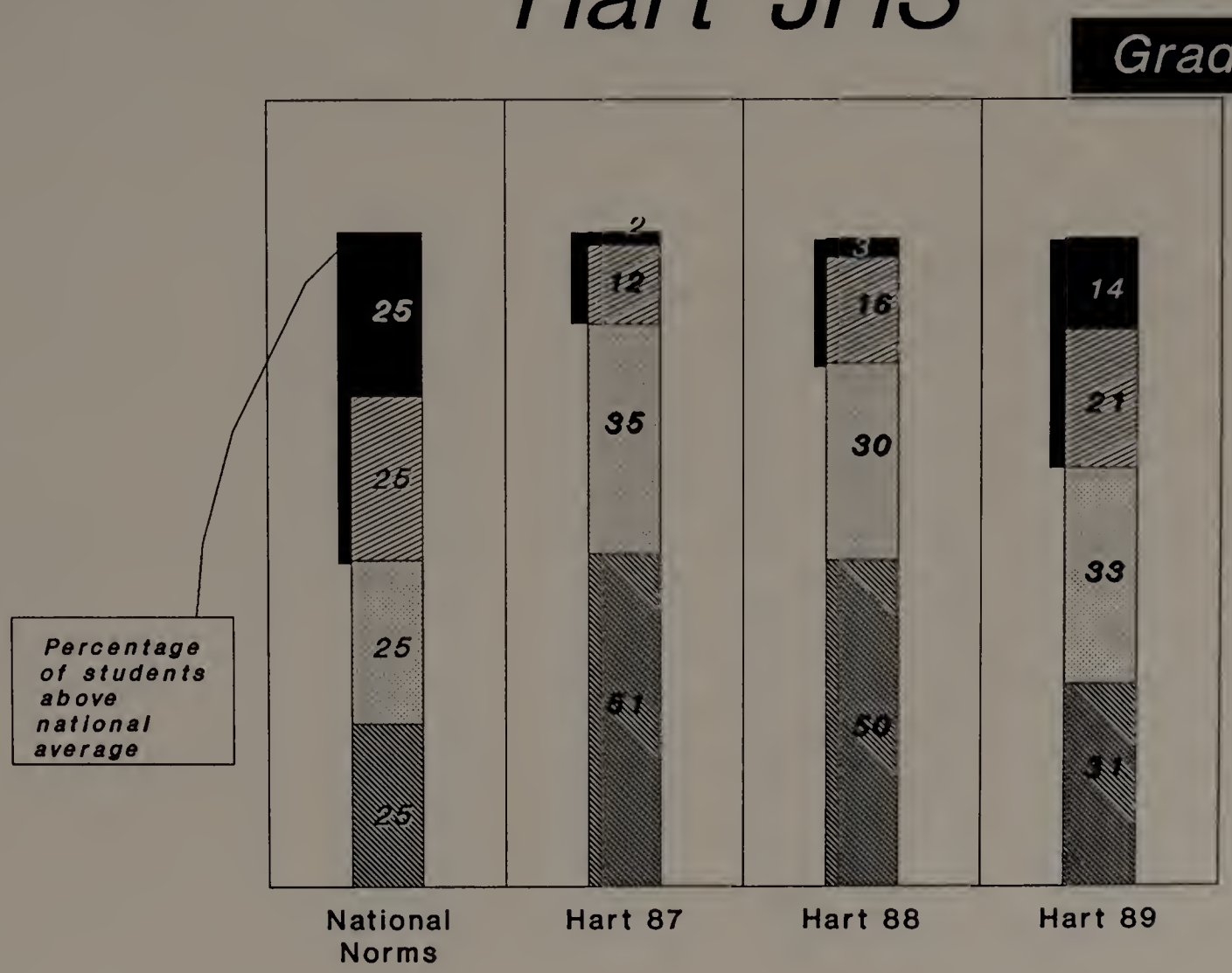
Note: percentages in individual columns may not sum to 100 because of rounding

Percentage of Students Scoring
Within Inter-Quartile Ranges

Hart JHS

Reading

Grade 9

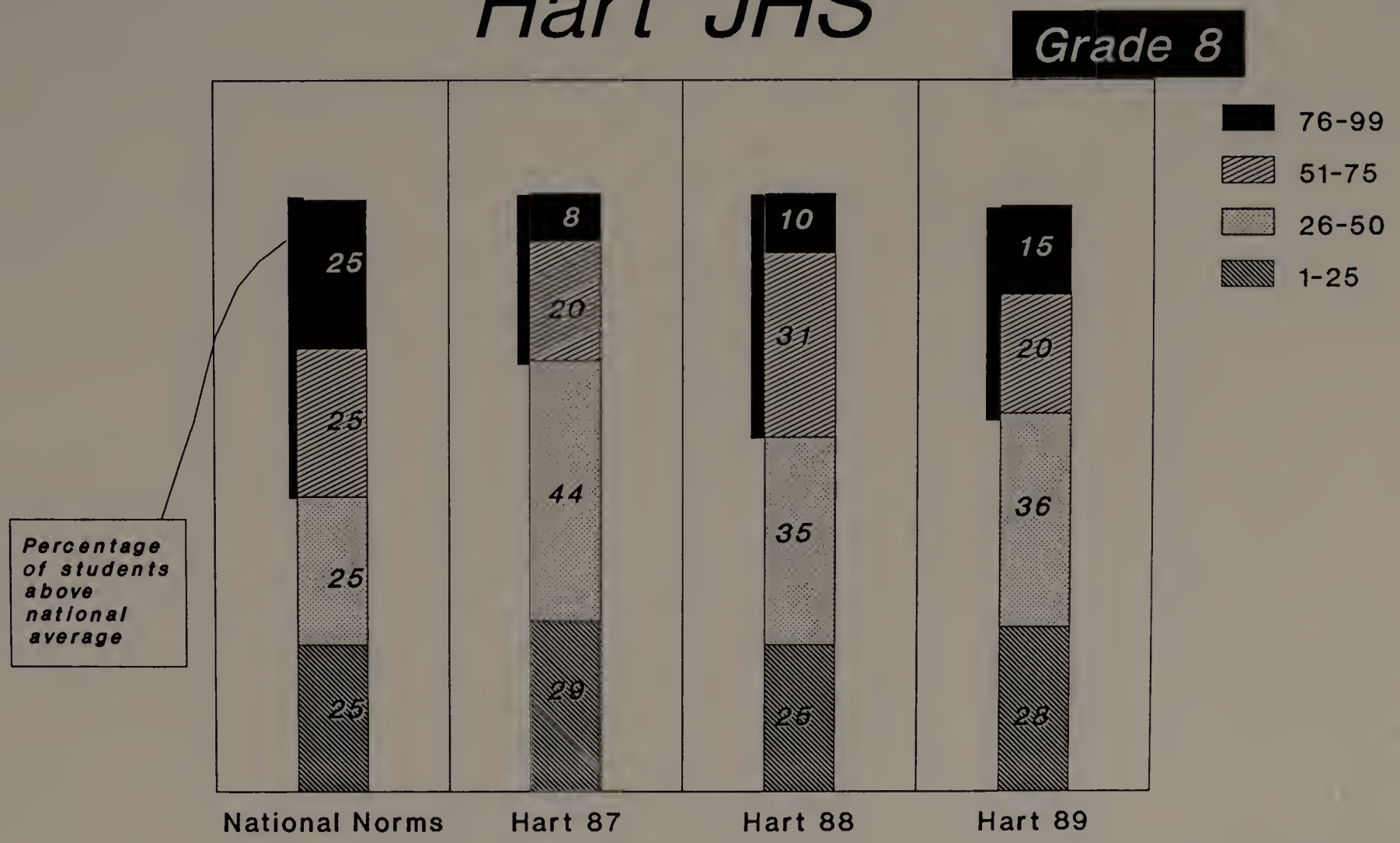


Note: percentages in individual columns may not sum to 100 because of rounding

Mathematics

Percentage of Students Scoring
Within Inter-Quartile Ranges

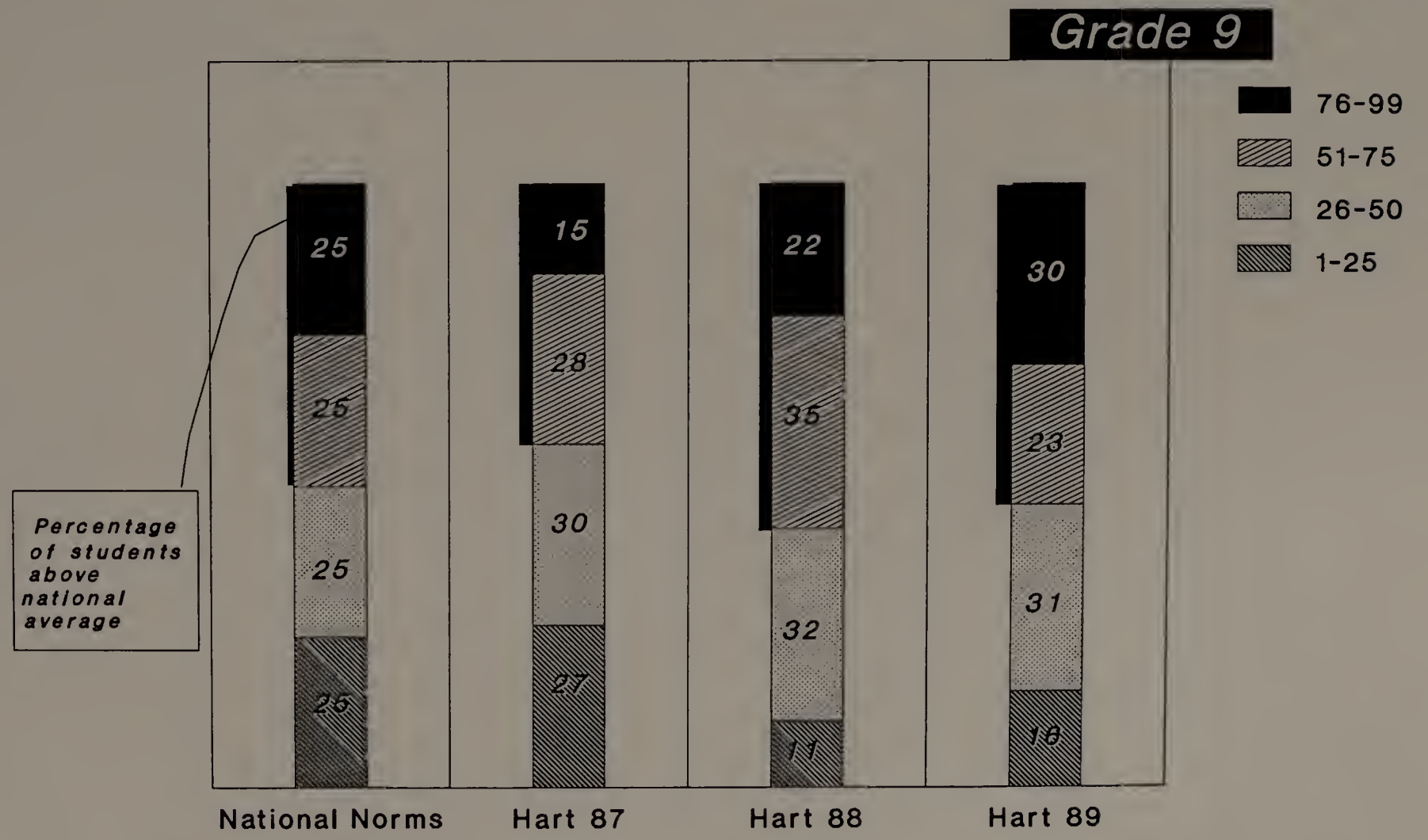
Hart JHS



Note: percentages in individual columns may not sum to 100 because of rounding

Mathematics

Percentage of Students Scoring
Within Inter-Quartile Ranges



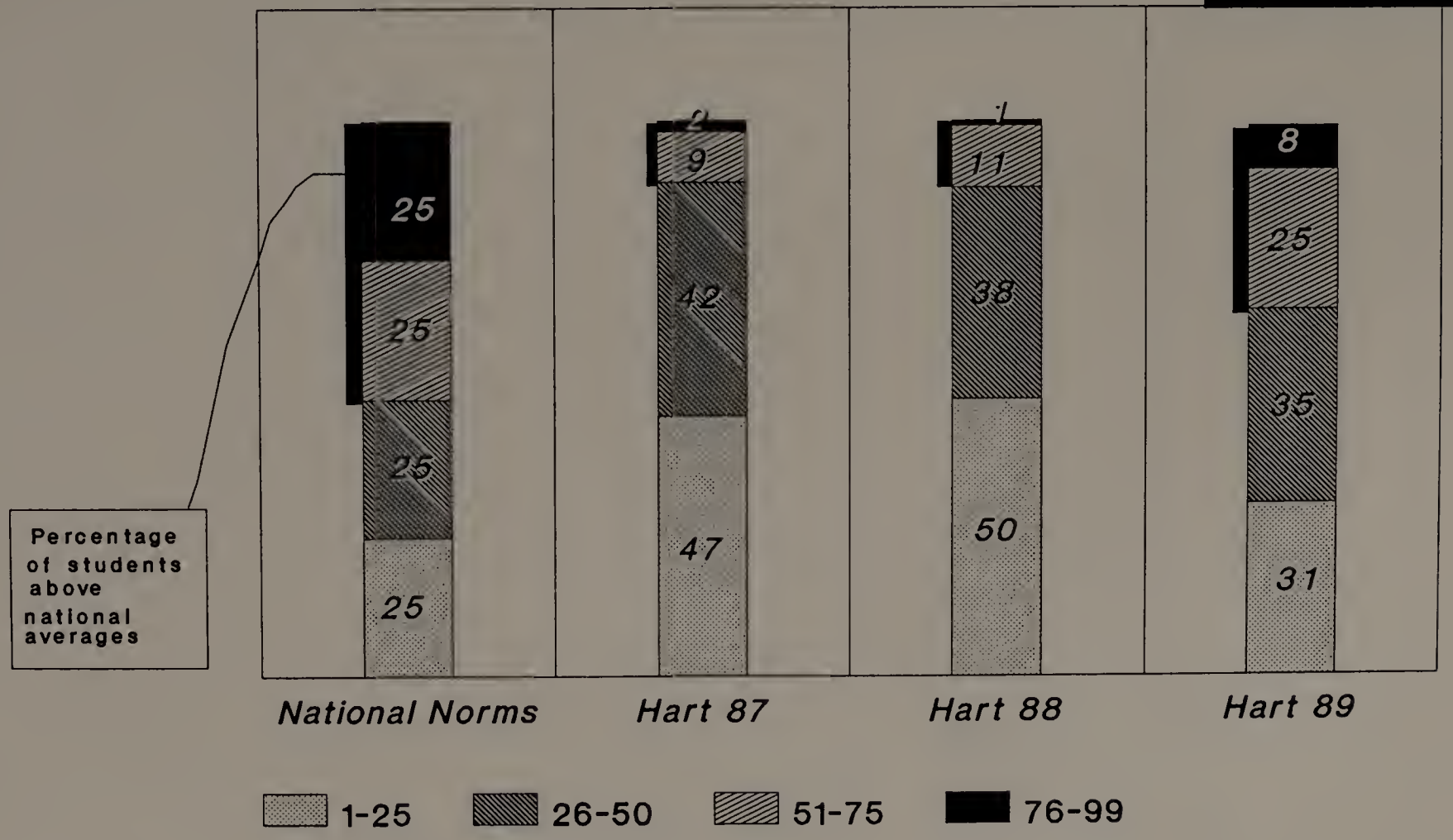
Note: percentages in individual columns may not sum to 100 because of rounding

Percentage of Students Scoring Within Inter-Quartile Ranges

Hart JHS

Science

Grade 9



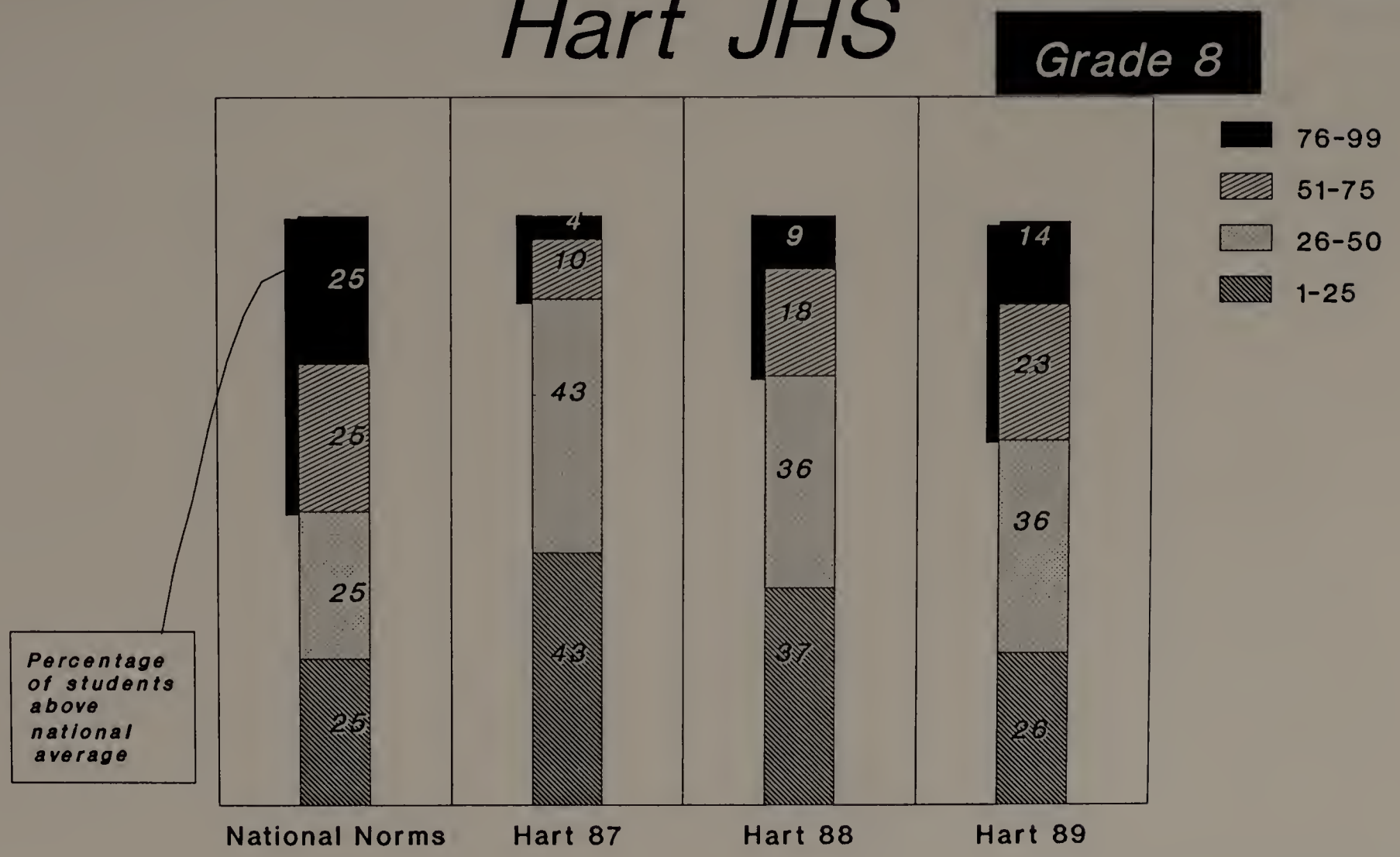
Note: percentages in individual columns may not sum to 100 because of rounding

Percentage of Students Scoring
Within Inter-Quartile Ranges

Language

Hart JHS

Grade 8



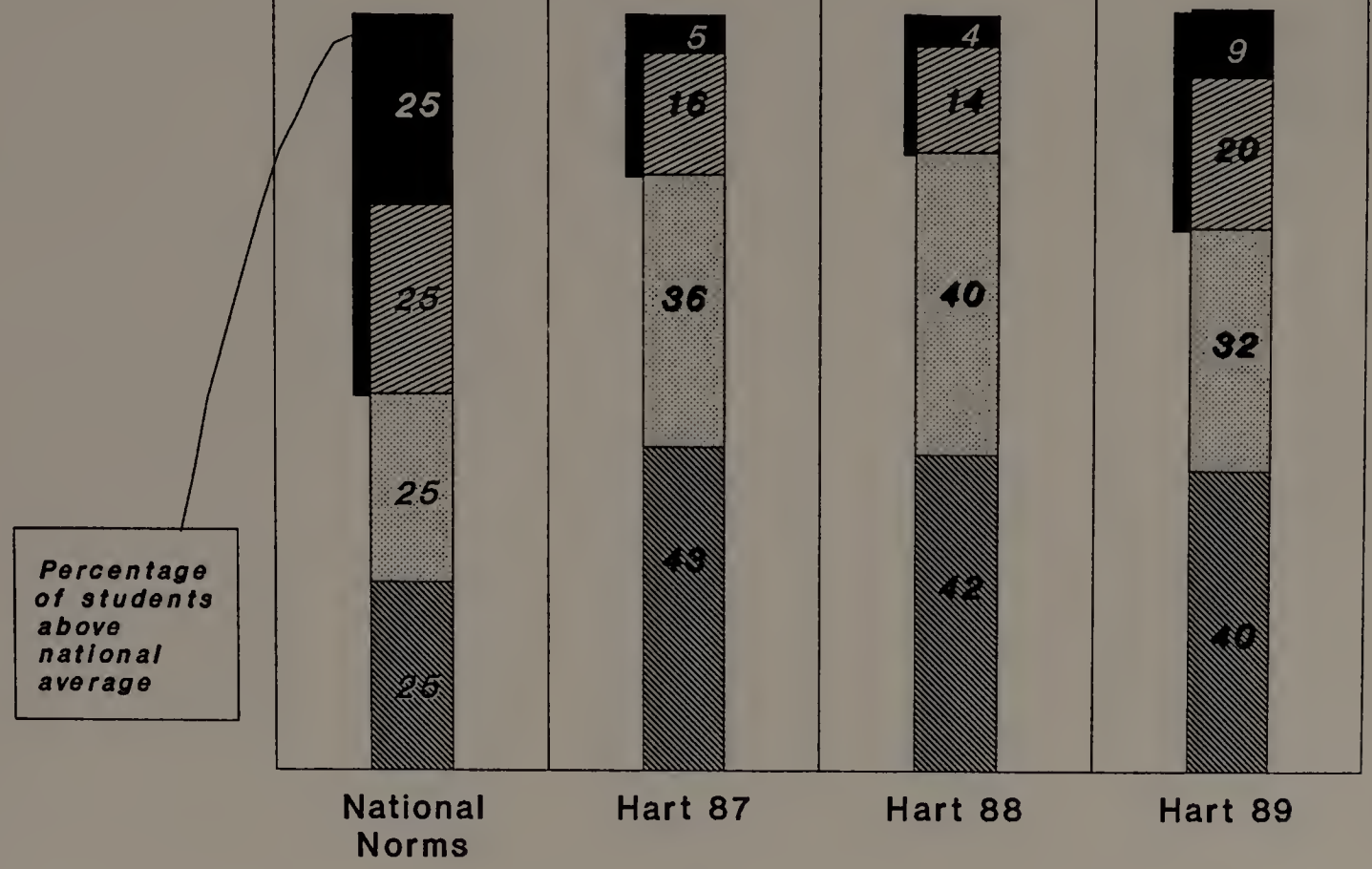
Note: percentages in individual columns may not sum to 100 because of rounding

Percentage of Student Scoring
Within Inter-Quartile Ranges

Language

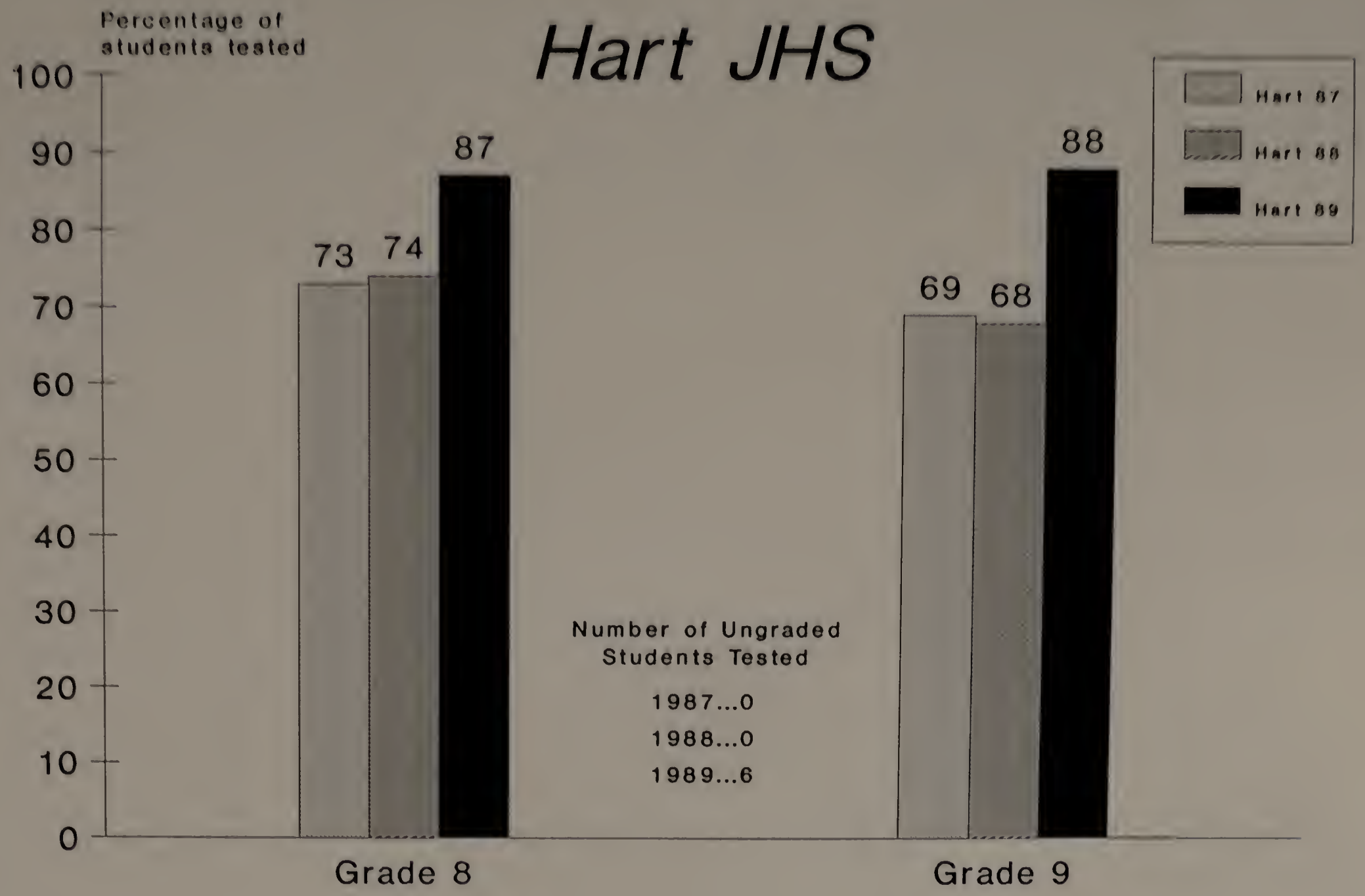
Hart JHS

Grade 9



Note: percentages in individual columns may not sum to 100 because of rounding

Hart JHS


Percentage of students tested
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
73
74
87
69
68
88
Hart 87
Hart 88
Hart 89
Number of Ungraded Students Tested
1987...0
1988...0
1989...6
Grade 8
Grade 9

APPENDIX C

PROCESS PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS FOR DETERMINING EFFECTIVE USE OF ACADEMIC LEARNING TIME

TIME OFF TASK MANUAL

The object of the Time Off Task observation is to record a sample of all students attending behavior or non-productive use of time during a scheduled reading or math period. The following behaviors are considered Off and On Task:

Off-Task Behaviors

- Chatting/Socializing
- Staring but not watching or listening actively
- Sleeping
- Watching others socializing and not involved in an academic task
- Doodling or drawing when should be doing an academic task
- Waiting for activity to start

On-Task Behaviors

- Reading "sanctioned" material
- Playing academic games
- Listening to directions
- Listening to academic content or interactions
- Watching demonstrations - related to academic work
- Writing - related to academic work
- Reporting, answering or reading aloud
- Performing an academically-related task, e.g., an experiment or project

Activities

It is also of interest to know what was the expected activity when students were off task. Were they supposed to be doing seat work (silent reading or written work); listening to the teacher making assignments or organizing (getting papers and books out); listening to the teacher's instructions or explanations; reading aloud; taking part in a question/answer period (children writing math problems on the board is included); or waiting in line or for materials.

Procedures (Code every five minutes)

The observer will need a seating chart with all of the students' names on it. The boxes need to be large enough so that several entries can be made. In the lower grades where students move in and out of groups, it will be necessary to place large name tags on the children if you don't know the children. (Name on two tag boards with yarn going over the shoulders works well.)

Enter the teacher's name, date and time on the form. Immediately after the period starts, make a scan or a visual sweep of the room -- going clockwise from the door you entered. Any student who is off task will be shown with one of the following symbols:

S = socializing
U = all other non-interactive off task behaviors

Now make a slash mark and under the slash mark show what the student was supposed to be doing: Seatwork, organizing, etc., as listed under activities. Make the marks small enough so that several entries can be made.

Watch the clock and make visual sweeps of the classroom every five minutes until the period ends. Count the total number of sweeps you made and enter that on the form.

On Figure 1, we find that Jose was uninvolved four out of ten sweeps. This occurred during instruction, seatwork, and recitation period. What might Jose's problem be? Bill was uninvolved during instruction and seatwork. Ursula and Sharon were socializing during organization time and seatwork. In each case, the teacher can make a judgement about what to do to help each child use their time effectively.

A summary of the percent of students off-task can be found by using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{the sum of the number off-task for each observation}}{\text{the number of students} \quad x \quad \text{the number of sweeps}}$$

For example:

In a classroom of thirty students, 10 observations were made. In the first observation, 2 students were observed to be off-task; in the second observation; 4 students were off-task; third = 3 students; fourth = 5; fifth = 3; sixth = 1; seventh = 2; eighth = 4; ninth = 7; and the tenth time, 6 students were off-task.

Using these figures, we obtain the following equation:

$$\frac{2 + 4 + 3 + 5 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 4 + 7 + 6}{30 \quad x \quad 10} = \frac{37}{300} = \underline{12.3}$$

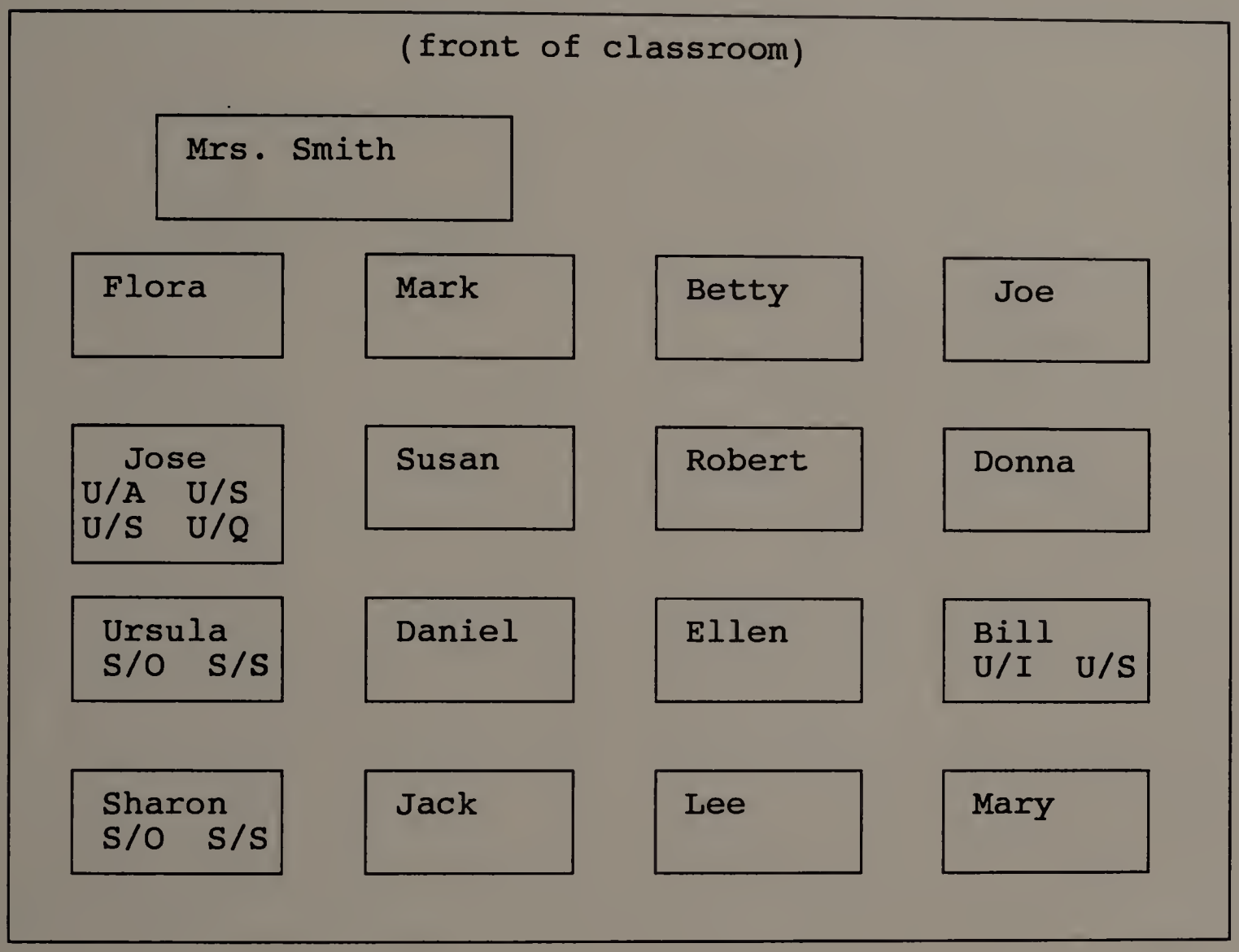
Thus, we have found that 12.3% of the students were off-task during this period.

STUDENT OFF-TASK SEATING CHART

Teacher Name: _____ **Time:**_____

Date: _____ **Number of Sweeps:** _____

Figure 1



Students off-Task Codes

S = Socializing
U = Uninvolved

staring
sleeping
watching others
doodling
waiting

Activity Codes (What they should be doing)

S = Seatwork
O = Organizing
I = Instruction
R = Oral Reading
Q = Question Answer (includes chalk board work
W = waiting

TIME OFF TASK MANUAL

The "Time Off Task Observation Instrument" provides information about individual student level engaged rates. The observer uses the instrument to record off task student behaviors and to describe the context in which the off task behaviors occur. Data are collected at five minute intervals during a scheduled instructional period.

ON TASK BEHAVIORS

Students who are on task are not coded during an observation, the assumption being that there are fewer incidents of off task than on task behaviors. "On task behavior" is defined as behavior which is consistent with the expressed instructional objectives of the teacher. Examples of this might be: reading sanctioned materials, working with manipulatives, art activities, listening to academic content or directions, answering questions, reading aloud, writing, performing experiments.

CODING

1. Off Task Behaviors

When student behavior is other than that which the teacher has designated, the particular off task behavior is described in code.

These codes are explained below:

OFF TASK BEHAVIOR	EXPLANATION	CODE
Chatting/Socializing	Talking, whispering, mouthing words, signaling to each other, passing notes.	**C**
Disruptive Behavior	Pushing, grabbing, poking, hitting, tripping, throwing things, repeated intentional noisemaking.	**D**
Attending to Personal Needs	Sharpening pencils, going to the bathroom, getting a drink of water.	**P**
Waiting for Assistance	Waiting with hand up or in line for assistance with work.	**W**
Uninvolved	Staring but not watching or listening actively, sleeping, watching others socialize, doodling, playing or fiddling with objects, rearranging desk.	**U**

2. **Activities**

It is also of interest to know what was the expected activity when students were off task. Were they supposed to be doing seat work, listening to the teacher give assignments, organizing, listening to instructions or explanations, reading aloud, taking part in a question/answer period, or waiting for an activity to begin? Listed below are the categories, explanations and codes for these classroom activities.

ACTIVITY	EXPLANATION	CODE
Seatwork	Any work done independently by students at their seats dittos, workbooks, tests, reports, etc.).	**S**
Organizing	Getting out papers, books, and supplies necessary to participate in an instructional activity; turning in homework.	**O**
Instruction	Listening to directions, instructions or explanations, watching demonstrations, watching film or filmstrips.	**I**
Reading Aloud	Reading aloud, either by teacher or students	**R**
Questions/Answer	Teacher is asking questions; students are replying. This could also include students working math problems on the board.	**Q**
Waiting	Waiting in line to leave the classroom, waiting because teacher is interrupted or needs to organize material for instruction.	**W**

3. **Grouping**

It is important to know whether the off task behavior occurred at a time when the student was expected to be attending within a small group, a large group, or working alone. The following are the codes for group size:

Group	Explanation	Code
Small Group	2 - 10 students	**S**
Large Group	11 - total class	**L**
Working Alone	Independent work	**A**

PROCEDURES FOR OBSERVERS

I. PREPARING FOR THE OBSERVATION

- Plan with the teacher to be observed to determine a mutually agreeable observation time.
- Provide the teacher with the numbers each child will wear or secure a seating chart before class begins.
- Check to determine if there is a functioning and visible clock in the room.

II. CONDUCTING THE OBSERVATION

Here are a few guidelines to make your observations easier.

- When you first enter the classroom, introduce yourself in a courteous manner. Tell the teacher that you would like to be able to hear and observe as much of the classroom interactions as possible. Ask the teacher's permission to stand or sit in the location which seems to be most appropriate. Sometimes it will be necessary for you to move around the classroom; ask the teacher whether he or she would mind if you change your location, providing you are unobtrusive. All the above questions should be asked before the observation period begins, if possible.

- If students ask you what you are doing, a response that is usually acceptable is, "I am watching the class." You should not encourage the students to interact with you. Be courteous and business-like. Avoid eye contact.

- Never mention or discuss any teacher's class with other school personnel or with anyone else. <u>Confidentiality is critical.</u> If two observers are observing the same teacher, they should not discuss the observation codes or a teacher's class while they are in the school or at any other time.

EXAMPLES OF CODING

Jimmy is talking to a neighbor during a time when the teacher is instructing the total class. This scenario would be coded **CIL**.

Kathy is hitting the person sitting in front of her during a question/answer session in which the total class is participating. This would be coded **DOL**.

Sam is looking out the window during a work period when the whole class is supposed to be finishing a ditto at their seats. This would be coded **USA**.

CODING PROCEDURES

A sweep will be made for off task students every five minutes. The observer first writes the time and the activity (e.g., dictation, organization, instruction) in the first sweep column, and then begins the sweep by moving the eyes systematically around the room. The sweep would follow the same pattern each time. One way to make sure of this is to start at the door you entered and sweep the classroom going clockwise around the room. Mark each off task student only once during a five minute sweep. **Do Not** change a mark after your eyes have passed over a student. **There are no entries for students who are on task**. If a student leaves the room, draw a line through the box for that time slot.

Watch the time and start a new sweep at the next five minute interval. Continue with this procedure until the period is over. Describe any unusual or hard to code events on the reverse side of the coding sheet for each observation.

PROCEDURES FOR SUMMARIZING TOT OBSERVATIONS

STUDENT SUMMARY SHEET

A. Creating Individual Students' Percent of Time Off Task (C)

1. Add the total number of Off Task entries (A) on all four observations and place the total in the right hand column (A) of the summary sheet.

2. Count up total number of sweeps of all four observations. Fill in number of summary sheets in the right hand column (B).

3. Divide each student's total amount of times off task (A) by the total number of sweeps (B). This will give you each student's percentage of time off task (C). Put the figure in the % Time Off Task column (C) next to student's number. If a student was not off task, enter a 0% in the column.

B. Creating Class Level Percent of Time Off Task (F)

1. Add together all numbers in the "Off Task Total" column (A). Put total at bottom on line (D).

2. Total the number of sweeps and place on line (E).

3. Divide the class total of Time Off Task (D) by the total number of sweeps (E).

4. Enter this percentage on line (F). This will be the Class Total of % Time Off Task.

Name: _____ Teacher Name: _____ Teacher Number: _____

Date: _____ School Name: _____ Total No. of Sweeps: ____

Reading: _____ (time) **Math:** _____ (time)

Please Note: T/A - Task/Activity

Student Number	Student Name	T/A	T/A	T/A	T/A	T/A	T/A	T/A	T/A	T/A	T/A	(A) Off Task Total

OFF-TASK: **C** = Chatting
D = Disruptive
P = Personal Needs

ACTIVITY: **S** = Seatwork
O = Organizing
I = Instruction
R = Reading
Q = Question/Answer
W = Waiting

GROUPING: **A** = Worksite
S = Small Group
L = Large Group

* * * * * * * * SUMMARY OF OFF TASK BEHAVIOR * * * * * * * *

Observer Name: _____ Teacher Name: _____

School Name: _____ Teacher Number: _____

Date: _____

OBSERVATIONS

OFF-TASK BEHAVIOR

	Chatting	Disruptive	Personal Needs	Uninvolved	Waiting
Reading (1)					
Reading (2)					
Math (1)					
Math (2)					
TOTAL					
TOTAL SWEEPS					
PERCENTAGE (%)					

TIME OFF TASK OBSERVATION SUMMARY SHEET

Observer Name:_____ Teacher Name: _____

Date: _____ School Name: _____ Teacher No.___

Reading: (1) _____ (2) _____
(Number of Observations)

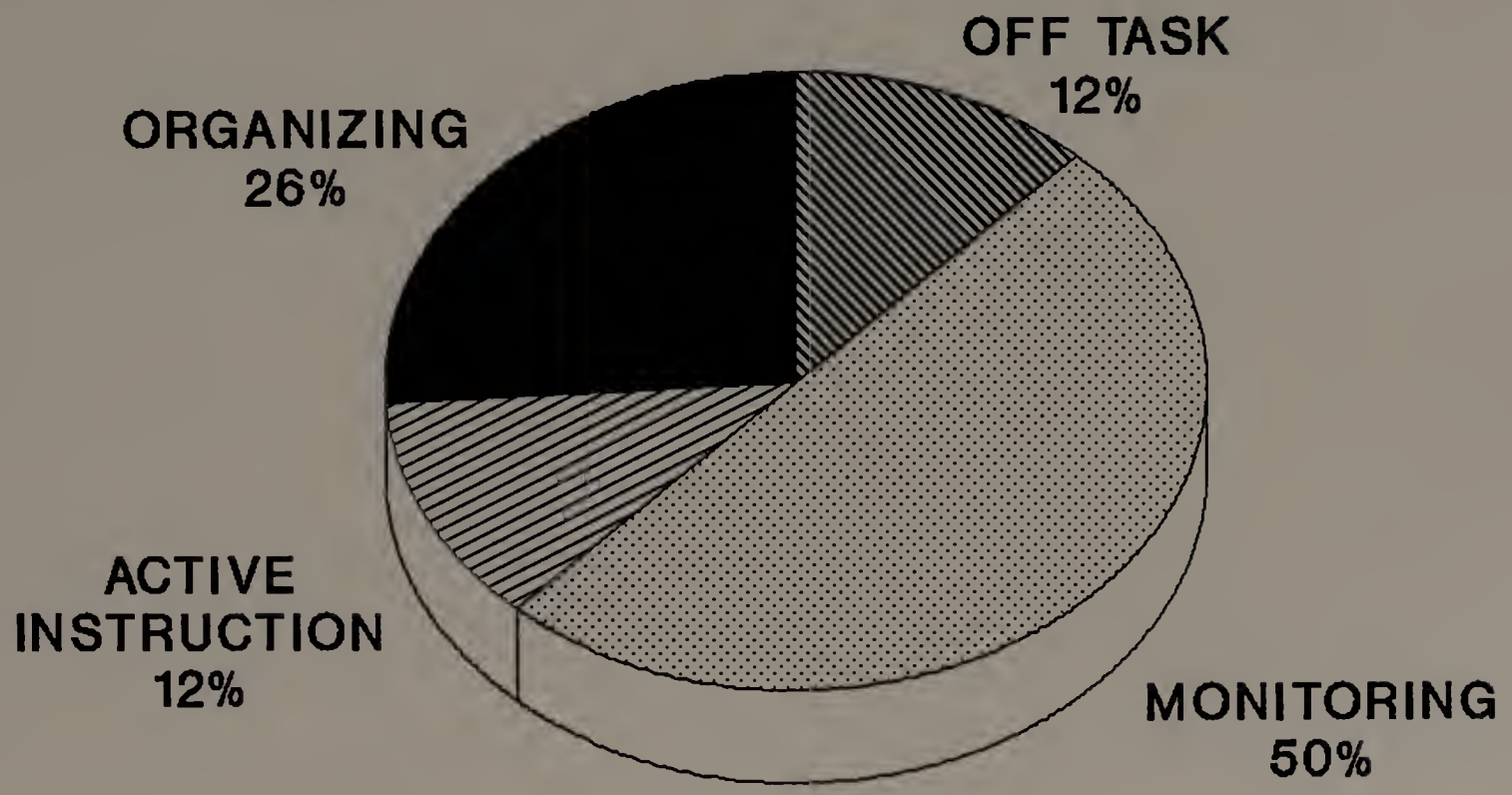
Math: (1) _____ (2) _____
(Number of Observations)

(C) % Time Off Task	Student Number	Student's Name	(B) Total # Sweeps	(A) Total Off Task

APPENDIX D

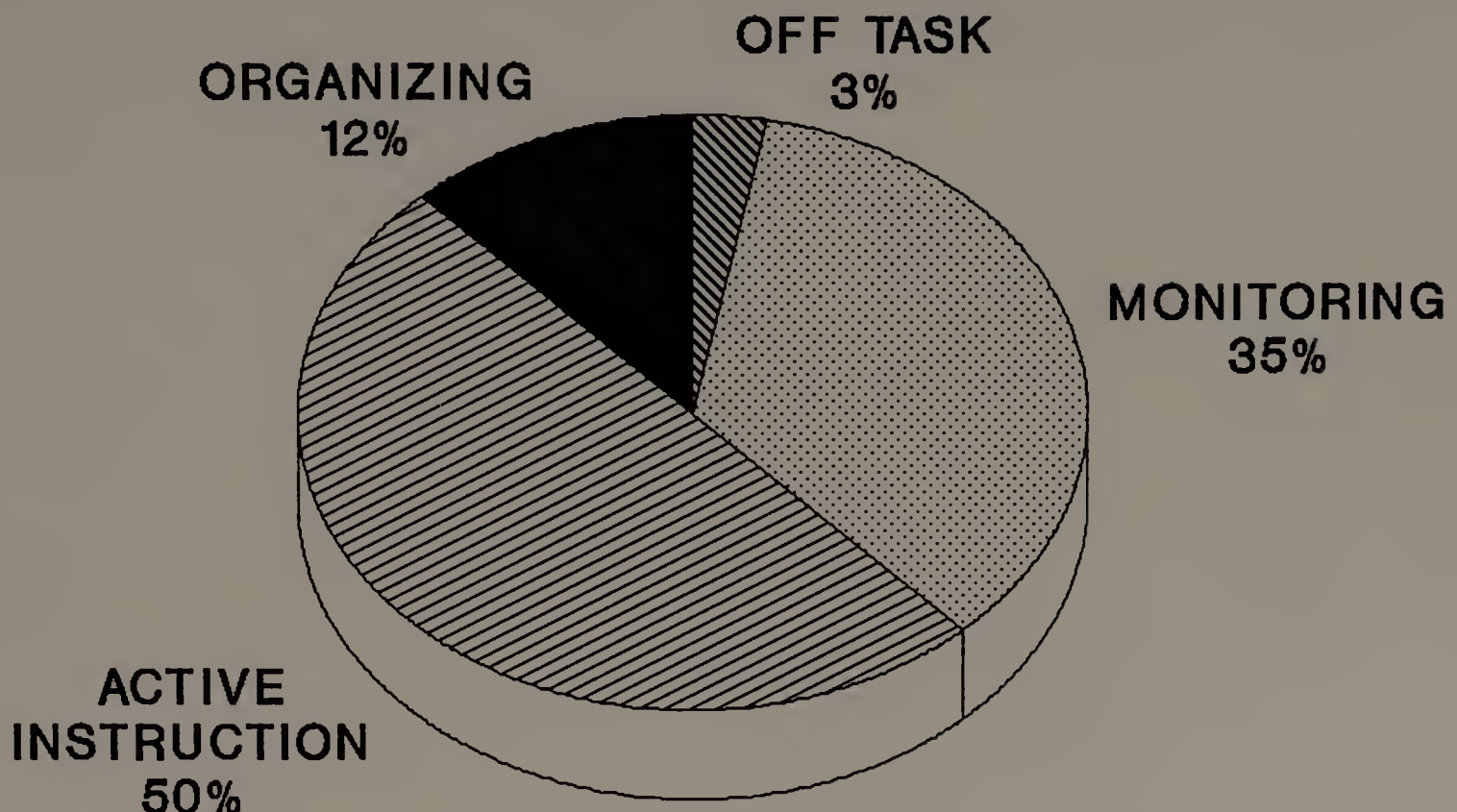
GRAPHS ON ACADEMIC LEARNING TIME

A 50-MINUTE READING PERIOD



AVERAGE USE OF TIME

A 50-MINUTE READING PERIOD



EFFECTIVE USE OF TIME

APPENDIX E

LETTER SENT TO PARENTS OF STUDENTS

LETTER SENT TO SUPERINTENDENT

Charles Hart Junior High School
601 Mississippi Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20032

October 10, 1989

Dear Mr./Mrs. _____,

My name is Kenneth R. Milner. You know me as your child's principal at Hart Junior High School. I am also a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts. I am writing a dissertation on how the effective use of academic learning time impacts upon the academic achievement of at-risk students in an urban junior high school. Your child has been randomly selected to participate in a confidential questionnaire. This is a voluntary questionnaire which will have no effect on your child's grades at school. However, in addition to being a requirement for my degree, the information could possibly improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning at Hart.

I would appreciate you granting me permission to give the questionnaire to your child. As I stated before, it will be confidential. By you signing this letter, it grants me that permission.

As always, I thank you for your continued cooperation. Please sign below.

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Milner

I, _____, give my son/daughter permission to take the questionnaire.

REPLY TO: Kenneth R. Milner
5105 Linwood Drive
Oxon Hill, MD 20745

October 10, 1989

Dr. Andrew Jenkins, III
Superintendent, DCPS
415 12th Street, N.W.
Room 1209
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Dr. Jenkins:

My name is Kenneth R. Milner, you know me as the principal of Charles Hart Junior School. I am also a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts. I am writing a dissertation on how the effective use of academic learning time impacts upon the academic achievement of at-risk students in our urban junior high school. In addition to being a requirement for my degree, the information obtained from this study could possibly improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning at Hart.

Dr. Jenkins, I would appreciate you granting me permission to conduct my study in the District of Columbia Public School System. I thank you for your consideration and approval.

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Milner
Principal

APPENDIX F

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

AGENDAS

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

* * * * GUESS WHO'S COMING TO SCHOOL ? * * * *

Tuesday, September 5, 1989
9:00 p.m.

OBJECTIVE: The staff will be able to demonstrate an understanding of at-risk youth.

THOUGHT: "Kids Are Always The Only Future The Human Race Has."

A G E N D A

Warm-Up Activity		Mrs. Mary Johnson School Base Inservice Coordinator
General Session:	**Who Are the At-Risk Youth?**	Mr. Kenneth Milner Principal
BREAK		
Small Group Session: **Recognizing At-Risk Youth.**		School Base Inservice Team
Evaluation:		Mr. Kenneth R. Milner

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

*** * * * P A Y A T T E N T I O N !! * * * ***

Thursday, November 9, 1989
1:00 p.m.

OBJECTIVE: Project participants will be able to demonstrate their ability to teach using varied learning styles.

THOUGHT: "You Cannot Put The Same Shoe On Every Foot."

A G E N D A

Warm-Up Activity		Mrs. Mary Johnson Participant
General Session:	A. Learning Styles B. Various Teaching Strategies	Mrs. Delores Kirk Participant
BREAK		
Small Group Session: Developing Lessons that Address Various Learning Styles.		Group Leaders
Evaluation:		Mr. Kenneth R. Milner

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

* * * * ACADEMIC LEARNING TIME * * * *

Wednesday, January 3, 1990
3:00 p.m.

OBJECTIVE: Project participants will be able to demonstrate an understanding of using academic learning time effectively with at-risk youth to provide maximum achievement.

THOUGHT: "Lost Time Is Never Found Again."

A G E N D A

Warm-Up Activity	Mr. Henry Hankerson Participant
General Session: **Definition of Academic Learning Time**	Mrs. Mary Johnson Participant
BREAK	
Small Group Session: **Assimilated Class Settings**	Group Leaders
Evaluation:	Mr. Kenneth R. Milner Principal

CHARLES HART JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

* * * * HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW? * * * *

Friday, March 16, 1990
1:00 p.m.

OBJECTIVE: Participating teachers will be able to analyze constructive criticism from students toward improvement of instruction.

THOUGHT: "A Good Name Is Rather To Be Chosen Than Great Riches."

A G E N D A

Greetings	Mr. Kenneth R. Milner Principal
Warm-Up Activity	Mrs. Joyce Gibau Participant
General Session: **Student Perceptions of Teachers**	Mr. Kenneth R. Milner
BREAK	
Small Group Session: **A Look In the Mirror**	Group Leaders
Evaluation:	Mr. Kenneth R. Milner

APPENDIX G

INFORMAL OBSERVATION FORM

FOR

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

INFORMAL OBSERVATION FORM

SCHOOL FOR IMPROVEMENT

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Time: _____

Subject: _____

Task Objective: _____

_____

_____

Instructional Style Observed: _____

_____

_____

Students Responses To Instructional Style: _____

_____

_____

Use of Allotted Academic Learning Time: _____

_____

_____

Other Comments: _____

_____

_____

Post Observation Conference Date: _____

Recommendations: _____

_____

_____

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